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THE  
FLYING CLOUD  
BY  
MORLEY ROBERTS



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# ing Cloud





Thaddeus  
S. C. 1862

# THE Flying Cloud

*A STORY OF THE SEA*

*By*

**MORLEY ROBERTS**

Author of "The Promotion of the Admiral,"

"The Idlers," "Rachel Marr,"

"Lady Penelope," etc.



BOSTON

**L. C. PAGE & COMPANY**

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# The “Flying Cloud”

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SPLENDOUR OF THINGS

It was magical, wonderful, “past all whooping,” to be young and to be alive, and to be on the deck of a great ship in a gale. Consider, you who have been to sea, and have indeed seen things, and known, maybe, many Hurricanes and Cyclones and Typhoons, and the Roaring Forties, and running down the Easting, and all the seven and seventeen seas of this strange round world of sea (wherein there is a little inconsiderable land); consider, I say, what it was to face your first big gale, if in your boy’s heart there were but half the natural courage of a boy who loved the sea ignorantly and all its mighty works! Magic is no word for it; there are no words. To paint it one asks those who know to come and bring their hearts’ knowledge and their youthful curiosity which lives in courage. Oh, most magnificent the youthful sea!

There are many seas, friend; as many as there are men, as many as there are times and periods in a man's life. But the Sea of all is the Sea of the Young Heart, not the sea of him to whom the Ocean is but a road of Traffic. Help us, then, to see the great waters as they were, before they become as a dusty road to men of dust.

This is the duty of the young: to learn their country and to go out. It is as inevitable a duty as to be born. Having attained existence in the secret womb, man is born. From his secret country he sees the world, and must have it, must be thrust into it, or drown. To attain knowledge, strength, wisdom, to know life and folly and disaster and triumph — these are the things, this is youth, this the food for the heart, for the spirit. To attain these all sacrifice is good, is splendid; is not sacrifice at all, but a gift rather, a great gift. To do, to be, to grow, to put out roots into the world and suck nutriment from the living rock and living soil! There is nought else, children of the sea, of the Island, of the land encompassed by the Father of Waters! "In the light, in the light, destroy us," said Ajax. In the light, in the light of the great world and waters destroy us by letting us consume our days!

Magic there was in the sea, in the gray waste, the gray-green wash of the sea; in the mighty blue of it, in the song of the wind, in the howl of the tempest, in the passionate hymn of the ship's

rigging under the blast; in the swash of her through opposing seas, in the hiss of her as she lay over and hung upon the gale. There was magic in it all, for these are the obstacles that make living. To go smoothly, lightly, on an even keel in heavenly latitudes of kindly trades or fair passage winds, is well, but that's not life. It's holiday, a camping holiday, merest sightseeing, mere peace, whereas we men want war, and must have it.

Shall the Young, who face these things, and hear the song of the Sea, understand? By my faith in war and the opposition of Nature to man, who climbs naturally to conquer her and himself, he shall not understand by words; but in his heart, which speaks in terms of the blood and the lifting pulse, he understands even better than wisdom and knowledge, though such wisdom and knowledge be attained in the selfsame way.

I swear, therefore, that the Greenhorn understood, and make affidavit and kiss the Book of the Sea and the Book of the Winds, my own two bibles that are one, that he knew all I write as he stood on the shining wet deck of the *Flying Cloud* in the flying rain, and saw her cast off from her midwife-tug somewhere a hundred miles to the sou'west of the Tuskar Rock, which is to be found by the learned (or ignorant, by inquiry) not far from the coast of Ireland.

By the living God of the Sea, and the spirit of

man, which is the lamp of God and searcheth out the inwardness of things, the Greenhorn, with wide-opened eyes and a wet face, understood these things that he desired to learn.

You shall never learn anything you do not know already. Let us be sure of that to begin with, and certainly we shall become friends as we go on, though there is no doubt that you are suspicious of me, and of the Greenhorn, already.

A certain writer said, " Nothing's good or bad but thinking makes it so." There were platitudes before him and shall be after, but there are new things also, and so let us shake hands on the pact that we are to do our best to understand each other. And in addition let us admit provisionally that there is nothing material, but that all things are spiritual, even badness and vice and the present materialism (on a fine inquiry). That being admitted, we come easily to a realistic but spiritualistic treatment of the sea and the Greenhorn and ourselves.

You shall perceive, friend, that this was a gale — a very disturbing hurricane, one that perturbed spirits and needed seamanship. But after all it's a matter of spirit to select what tack we shall heave to on in the storms of Being. I see plainly we are shadows among shadows, winds among winds, ships on a sea. So now we understand one another.

Let then the Greenhorn enter, and the *Flying*

*Cloud* with her white officers and her mixed Khalasi crew, and her passengers and the tail-end of a hurricane bred somewhere in the Bermudas but doing a fine flurry still in the Bay of Biscay.

Presently we may get to Australia or to an understanding.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SHIP

SOME great creatures, for purposes of their own, built the *Flying Cloud* at Port Glasgow, in 1869, and they built her of iron, steel not yet being common for such. She was, according to her main-deck beam, which never lies, of 1,491 tons register, and was a full-rigged ship. She had fine lines, and could hang on a wind and go close-hauled like a knife, and sometimes she was a real glutton at running away from a wind. Heavens! you shall see presently what she could do in that way. She usually went to Melbourne or Sydney with a general cargo, all things thinkable, and took horses thence to Calcutta, and then sailed to England, Home, and Beauty (fogs, dens, and debauchery, perhaps), with rice or what you will. Her crew was Calashee or Khalasi (men of India who talked Gujeráthi and Marathi), Klings, Malays, Sidi boys (these being descended from negro slaves of the Northwest), good sailormen and bad, as one shall discover. She had a Serang, boatswain, or bo'sun, the foreman of the crowd, and quartermasters, or *Sukkanees*, and *Bhandaris*, or cooks. Such a

gathering of turbans, rags, colours, and brown and mud-coloured skins was fine to see.

Her white men were these:

First, the skipper, the captain, the "old man," one William Dundas, Scotchman, forty-two years of age, with a beard, and some dignity as it seemed, but short, mild-eyed, gentle-spoken, downcast, sleepy. Of him very much hereafter.

Second, the mate, Simon Mackintosh, a Scotchman, too, but of another order. The "old man" was a gentleman to look at and had a quiet voice. Old Mac was a tarry sea-dog, with a shining scaly hide to the back of his hands, and so freckled and burnt and bedevilled by ten thousand tropic days that his skin was as that of a tanned bull. As if Europa's bull swam round the world and salted the hair off his hide. Hear Mac roar; he had a voice of hurricane force, Number Twelve, Beaufort scale — a voice to reach from the main-deck through the swash of the seas and the tumult of the gale to the skysail-yard, and make a boy jump there. The man was biggish, but light; hairy; good-humoured; knowing the sea, and simple; pleasant as the trade-wind, but capable of salt phrases. Seventeen years before he got his "ticket," his second greaser's, second mate's ticket, he served in the foc'sle before the mast. In ten ships, or twenty, in so many schools of seamanship, he learned the ways of the sea and of

the winds, and then hammered out navigation by the sweat of his brow. But he preferred still the work of the ship to "a day's work." See him splicing; he could do a wire splice on his head, or turn in a dead-eye in a dream, or make a Matthew Walker on a four-stranded rope while he talked of Glasgow, or Leith, or some far-coast port the devil alone knows where. A good man and a real one was Simon Mackintosh, weather-beaten, salted (like a ship), true as a tested stamped cable, or an anchor. Stock and fluke, crown and bill, he was steel. Never did the Greenhorn meet a better man, and never will, says the Greenhorn. Where is he now? No doubt alive; such a man wouldn't die easy. He had ninety years in him, last survey, and was built of heavier plates than are now required, and, therefore, has a big star to the broad A which marks him of iron. If he should be dead and drowned, some earth or some sea-fish is the better of him. Many a spot of earth is less fertile for many a man, many a fish can't digest them, one would think.

Tom Budd was the second mate. He came from Devon, and was long and strong and well-nourished, and a man, but not remarkable, so far. His years were but twenty-eight, say. He may be some one by this. He knew his duty, more or less — that is to say he knew the sea part of it. He could get drunk, as one may find out. But so could Mackintosh. The Greenhorn knows that.

He saw them both drunk, covered with blood, roaring. Heavens! what a day that was; we will come to it by and by. How strange a pretty man will look at dawn not knowing that he'll have two black eyes at noon. So death serves us, after all, death who shears through steel, cuts knots, draws splices, and ends all.

I could speak of others — of the Serang, of the quartermasters, of the *Bhandaris*, of the head steward. But what does one know of them after all? They appeared and disappeared. Let them speak when their time comes, or look strange or appealing, or savage or humble, as you will.

In a word, it was a strange ship. So the Greenhorn said, though he knew nothing of ships — out of books, that is. Yet some boys have luck; they tumble into fine adventures. One might have gone to the antipodes in a *Mary Jane Mollycoddle*, or a kind of *S. S. Bethel*, or not have gone at all; and here Jack Ellison (the Greenhorn) had flouted fate, quarrelled with his uncle, given up school, and gone to Australia for to seek his fortune in the *Flying Cloud*, which was no floating bethel, or missionary ship, but a howling school indeed, with great professors who knew B's from any bull's feet, and could curse in twenty languages, and tell you horrors and tropical indecencies, and generally be really instructive as to the realities of real active living life. It was a magnificent chance; was it not?

Wonderful, wonderful above all things it is to be young, to be empty, to be ignorant, and not to be corked up empty and sent out sealed. Let us learn, gentlemen! Fall to!

## CHAPTER III

### THE YOUTH

THE sky had a passionate aspect, an aspect of ugly and suspended anger. For it was heavy and leaden, with a horrible lividity in it, and an oiliness that for ever threatens wind. From the quarter of the hidden declining sun a gray light showed at times, and in a horizontal split was a lake of olive green; above this and below was red, an unnatural and offensive glare of colour. Under the pall of the sky the sea heaved in long rollers which were not wholly regular. There was an agitation about them, a suggestion of a cross sea afar off, a threat as of oppression. They were apprehensive, and fled before the wind pursued. The colour of the sea was the colour of lead tinged with black in the hollows of it; but here and there it showed a tinge of deep sea-blue. To the north-east it rolled more greenly towards soundings.

"We shall get it," said old Mackintosh. He knew.

Yet the wind was steady from the south. It was very warm, and yet in it there were moments when it felt chill. Presently it failed. The dull flicker in the rollers failed with it; they moved

like heavy oil. But though it was a calm there was the sound of a wind afar off — a sound like hidden moaning. The rollers increased.

"We shall get it hot and heavy! What a devil's brew," said old Mackintosh.

The decks of the *Flying Cloud* as she went out to meet the devil and his gale of wind were yet all of a litter.

"A regular hurrah's nest," said the second mate, Budd, as he strove to reduce chaos. A second mate is a god of order or not worth his salt or half it. The decks were full of cases sent on board the last moment — provisions, cordage, canvas, all the paraphernalia and dower of the ancient calling of the sea. The Lascars ran and chattered. Their Serang blasphemed in Malay, in Gujeráthi; he kicked his men as he passed them, and called them the brethren of pigs.

"Puckerow, sooar," said the Serang, with his little pig's eyes ablaze. He was five foot four in height, as broad as a barrel, as wrinkled as a wet ram's hide, the colour of ancient leather. He could smile though. There's a touch of humour in a Malay.

What with puckerowing cases, lashing tanks, and frapping stunsail-booms on the deck-house, and at the same time seeing that the gear was ready for running what time the ship would let go her tug and start upon her own, there was enough to do. Enough? Too much, of course,

but when there's too much men shine if they are men.

"Budd's all right," said Mackintosh. With what fervour, with what happy blasphemy, which implies thanks to high heaven, who supplies second mates, if the devil doesn't, will a mate say the second greaser is all right! It is as though he said:

"My right hand's all right!"

The hurrah's nest (it's a fine sea phrase, is it not?) became by fine gradations a nest of order. Things disappeared magically. The bo'sun's locker absorbed paint and oil and driers in drums and kegs. The sail-locker's maw took in canvas, a new topsail, a new inner jib, and some flying kites that modern sailors damn. To blazes, they say, with stunsails and the like. The steward, a splendid handsome dark skin, accepted this and that for the lazarette (which you shall pronounce as if spelt with one "t"), and the fore-peak swallowed a contingent of blocks, luff, and gun tackle, and so forth, together with coils of inch and two-inch and three-inch rope and eighteen thread, and the devil knows what!

"Hurry, you swine; be quick, you pigs! Oh, you sons of pimps and crimps, hurry," said the Serang. He knew well what the sky held in its lap. The sky was a den in which a gale was holed-up, like a savage bear. Out would it come.

Those who were acquainted with the sea and its

great actions felt peculiar uneasiness; their nerves strung themselves and they twanged. Sea-birds screamed; they left the ship not reluctantly and flew landward. There was terror in the air. Gusts came out of the south — some warm, some cold. They drew their breath from the cold heights of the air or from the hot depths of some tropic breeding-place of storm.

The ship, besides being full of knowledge, such as wise old Mackintosh, the sea graduate, was full of fine ignorance. There were passengers who had never seen the great waters before. They knew nothing, and were like children ignorantly happy in the very threat of life. Yet these same passengers were not happy. They had left things, deserted the solid land, the solid, unmoving, upholding soil. They feared all moving things, feared mere water. The aspect of cold water appalled them; they wanted green warmth, wanted firmness. Women wept on bundles, babies screamed. Men sulked in corners and were thrust aside by Lascars. Their pipes went out; some turned as green as water in soundings.

"For God's sake, man, get below out of the way," said Budd, finding one Irishman in the coil of the main-topsail-halliards as it hung on the pin.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the unhappy ousted Celt. He fed the adjacent sea.

"They'll have a time, the miserable devils,"

said Budd, happily. He liked work and saw it coming. The rollers grew heavier. The *Flying Cloud* snatched at her hawser, held the stubborn tug back. So a horse being led draws back reluctant. The tug belched black smoke. The smoke rolled low on the surface of the black sea. A squall sang out over the face of the water and drove the smoke headlong as the sea whitened.

"Phew!" said Budd, "we shall have it."

He grabbed the carpenter as he passed.

"Chips, did you look at that topmast fid?"

"It's all right, sir," said Chips. Everything had to be all right; the sea said so.

All lumber disappeared from the deck and so did the passengers. They fled below to escape spray. The decks grew wet. Rain descended; darkness threatened as the unseen sun declined.

Now the horizon was for a little while visible, as clear as a cut card. But the hills of sea danced on the verge of it. The lower limb of the sun came down from the clouds. It was a bloody, rayless round of copper, polished and dreadful as a war shield. The rims of the ragged clouds were edged with purplish red, outlined with sullen smoking fire. Their light went out suddenly; there was the colour of drying blood on the sea and then a glare that came from no quarter and seemed unaccountable. The whole sky reddened angrily and then grew black. The water was a gray waste. A squall sang out like a charge of grape-shot

Rain was in it; it stung the hardest cheek and brought colour there if a good heart beat in a sound body.

"Let it come; we're here first," said Budd.

To be here first gives a man time for preparation, for order, for strategy. But most of all it allows an hour, say, for bringing one's reserves into their place. And now reserves might be needed. Even Jack Ellison, the Greenhorn, guessed as much. And all he didn't know about the ways of the sea was nearly all there was to know. He watched the bloody drama of the sinking sun with bright, nervous, happy eyes. Darkness fell as he watched on the cleared main-deck. He saw the clouds split and show one fair, splendid star, so round and fair indeed that a man might have called out:

"A steamer's head-light right ahead, sir."

A dropped veil of cloud took it. In the zenith there was a space where some dim stars showed. They were not bright, but blurred and hazy. They never lived through the next squall, but withdrew. And one squall came after another, till it blew a gale that threatened very much more.

Jack hugged the rail and listened to the plunge of the ship as the insistent tug pulled at her. On the waves he saw the green glimmer of the star-board side-light, for now it was dark. There was a feeling of war about — the tug was commander; the vessel reluctant, half-asleep, unhappy at being

dragged into war. Overhead every sail was furled; the yards, braced sharp up on the port tack, offered as little resistance to the south wind as might be; but they sang out, creaked a little, truss and parral, while the backstays, stays, and braces, and the network of gear screamed beautifully. Young Ellison, nineteen years of age and a schoolboy going to seek his fortune — bless his heart — did not know a luff tackle from the maintopmast-staysail-tripping-line block, but he had salt water in his blood. The spray had a fine, fine taste. He lipped it lovingly; liked it better than duff at that moment. There was something grand about a ship, something magnificent, handsome, and romantic. What's romance but the desire to be called on for one's uttermost? He felt launched himself.

Here was a ship! In such had the world been discovered; such had carried Drake and Fro-bisher; such had beaten Spain and rounded the Great Cape. Ship had burst through ice into far, far lands; had carried men since men were masters of a log or a sheet of bark. Gods, think of it! What heroes had sucked spray from their lips and loved the flavour as much as nectar?

He was in a ship on the big waters. Far under their lee roared a northern town with muddy streets and the common things that no youngster can see are yet miracles, but here was a wet and heaving deck, and there a tug dragging them into

the great arena. Down yonder, down the great paths of Ocean, lay Australia. How magical to taste the salt, to feel the heave, and to know that Australia lay under heel! And he saw Hindoos and Malays going past him, heard real seamen bellow orders, saw things done. He had lived with books these nineteen years, had been born to them, had loved them, read them, believed them, thought he knew something, was sure of it, and now big Budd roared bad Hindostanee at a man called a Serang, and the Serang produced men and did something. A Roman baby might have so regarded the centurion.

Ellison was young, proud of what he knew, sure of it, and yet — He certainly didn't know Hindostanee or the name of a handy-billy. To offer these men a dish full of Latin and some half-digested algebra, combined with a painfully construed Greek tragedy, would be tragical indeed. He didn't know, but wanted to know horribly. He listened to everything, looked at everything, said he would and should know. After all he had been trying to know as much as he could even at school. This was a university; he was fresh to these salt-water graduates.

And now it blew magnificently. The rollers were beaten down, between them other waves grew; there was white foam on every lifted crest. The wind took the crests, cut them like foam-flowers, and threw them on board. The *Flying*

*Cloud*, still painfully led by the nose, like a recalcitrant bull with iron in gristle, pitched as she was dragged and slapped seas on board. Sometimes in the darkness he saw the blacker smoke of the tug. Also he saw a gleam of light in her. There was hardly a flicker in the *Flying Cloud*, only a gleam from the steward's pantry just under the break of the poop, inboard of the alleyway on the port side where the second mate's cabin was, though by the ancient tradition of the sea he should have been on the starboard side. In the night where no gleam of artificial illumination comes, a man's eye dilates wonderfully; he sees like a cat. Ellison saw the big wet world and rejoiced as a young man will.

In the back of his mind he saw far to loo'ard, some of his people — his cousins, his fierce, fine old uncle, a dominating patriarch, forgetful of his own youth. Looking out into the spray, the swish and turmoil of the waters, was to see the new world, and the old as well; a dim, romantic land under sea, and a lighted room where girls sat hushed over books or work, while the fierce white-moustached pasha, their father, droned or damned. To escape this young Ellison was here, a passenger — a steerage passenger — to the Antipodes. Gone were his Greek, his Latin, his riders upon Euclid, and now he heard Malay and Hindostanee, and solved riders upon the problem of the sea.

"Damn you, sir," said his uncle, "I'll lay my stick about your monkey's back!"

It takes good discipline or native meekness to stand damning and the argument of the stick. Jack took neither, but his hat; took it in a fury, opened the front door, marched out, slammed it, and left the poor savage uncle all aghast at his brother's boy's action. The girls wept; so did their mother. It cost sixteen pounds ten shillings to go to Australia in the steerage — that pig's method — and on pressure the old man supplied it, finding Jack inexorable. The threat of the stick did it. The mere threat of the wood entered Jack's soul, and made him wooden — as hard as teak or ironwood.

"That, or I enlist," said Jack. The 17th Lancers were in town.

"Oh, anything but that!" said white moustache, sorrowfully.

So now the girls at home cried a little, and the sky wept, and the wind blew, and great was the turmoil in the Bay of Biscay or the seas to the southeast of Ireland, where the tug took the *Flying Cloud* with her baby Cæsar. Jack dashed salt spray from his cheek, perhaps from his eye. He was both hard and soft, as one may see. Since his boyhood came to him, he had yearned for the ocean, tried for it, had failed. His brother bolted to it, got there, was found, brought back, and at last apprenticed. Jack, the elder, envied him.

What was his little Greek to seamanship? A Greek seaman knew Greek. So he knew English, but of the sea what did he know? He must know, and could endure all to that end. An infinite satisfaction filled him. He was introduced to Neptune, to Oceanus, to the deep seas. And such an introduction, too; it was as if some youthful subaltern came into the hands of war upon a joined battle.

Every one knew it was on the eve of a battle, to say the least. The faint shimmer from the foc'sle, where forty Lascars bedded and fed, showed them in oilskins. Budd and the skipper were in them. They shone wetly. So the ship shone and her teak decks gleamed. Brass on harness casks shone brassily, and the brass pins in the fife-rail at the mainmast. All things were wet and clammy; the gear dropped with wet, the decks ran with fresh and salt. And the pipe of the wind was magical, harmonious, splendid. The bass of the wind where it split on masts and yards, and roared in draughts about the deck-house, went in with the higher notes of the stays and braces.

Every rope had its song as the ship lifted on the waves, and put a strain on things with the 'scend or the dive of her. She groaned, was dragged on again and wallowed, scooped up a sea and slammed it down on the main-deck, where it wetted Jack's boots, he not being quick

enough to jump on the spare topmast. He swore happily and was delighted and savage.

So far the *Flying Cloud* had come under the escort of the tug, and those who knew felt safe enough. But now the gale grew mightily. Budd and Mackintosh and the skipper stood on the poop on the weather side, under a weather-cloth in the mizzen-rigging.

"The Lord send the hawser holds," said old Mac. "We want a good offing, weather like this. We shall catch it hot and heavy from the sou'-west before the night's out, sir."

"To be sure, to be sure, Mr. Mackintosh," replied the "old man."

He was a silent "old man," ten years Mac's junior, and fifty years younger in experience, for Mac was salt all through and knew very much indeed. He trusted greatly to Mackintosh, as indeed he might. Some had a poor opinion of Captain Dundas. Reasons may be seen for this. Things come out at sea. The sea's *viva voce* is trying, searching.

"We're ready, anyhow," said Budd, with satisfaction, "but —"

"But what, Mr. Budd?" asked the skipper, rubbing his cheek where the spray stung it.

"I'd rather have white men for'ard, sir."

"You've two for one, aye, and more," said the captain, slowly. He had sailed with Khalasi crews for ten years.

"Oh, well, sir," said Budd. He threw out a mighty arm at the southwest quarter, as who should say, "There's something for this garlicky gang of bloody Hindoos!" But he said nothing.

At dawn they should be well out to sea, and then the tug would let go. They would get out of their corner, so to speak, and enter the running with a living gale.

"My oath, she'll have a time," said old Mac, a little later. He rubbed his hands and considered the strength of canvas, and, like Budd, wished to the Lord of winds and waters that he had at least a white bo'sun. The old Serang was rotten, said Mackintosh. He had been born in the water, so to speak, and bred to it, and out of a ship was no more than a mummy; yet now he was old, or being an Oriental, looked it, and hadn't the voice a bo'sun should have — the voice of a bull of Bashan. However, he could kick his men amazingly, could lift his leg like a dancer, and cuff a Kling in the ear-hole. It was fine to see him. But when the sea and sky turn themselves loose and tear things, white men hanker for whites. That's true; there's no imagination about that. Every race has its breaking-point. One knows the Oriental point is less than ours. There must be a table in "Strength of Materials" to show it.

"This isn't goin' to be a fizz-gig of a breeze, Mr. Budd," said Mackintosh.

"No, sir," replied Budd.

The wind roared now, it became whole and solid, was not split. It had been tuning before, not playing; the squalls had been no more than a try. Now they settled to it and came in with the body of the wind. Oh! it was a very handsome gale already, there was no doubt of that. Without a rag of canvas showing, the *Flying Cloud* lay over a little as the bulldog tugged at her. She gave a fine wet song already, and moaned too. Her song wasn't all cheerful. It was the song of one who is not up to the mark yet. No one is till he gets to work. The biggest fighter on earth has a queer feeling as he enters the ring — a feeling of strange hollowness just about the spot where lies the solar plexus, as doctors call it. Ask any who know. There's something all alive about a ship. She feels, poor thing, but she's an Amazon after all.

It was going to be no fizz-gig of a breeze, said old Mac. He wasn't too old to enjoy that fact. And young Ellison wasn't too young. The skipper, who was the oddest, most inexplicable wise man and fool, walked to and fro pondering. No one knew whether he liked fine weather or foul. He was silence incarnate. But he always carried on, as seamen say. Never was a man so loath to clew up sail and furl. He hated to shorten down at any time; would rather lose a sail or even a stick, so it seemed. And yet, was he a brave man? Ellison wondered later whether he was.

But he knew old Mac was as brave as the west wind.

Phew! said the wind. Everything was on a strain — a fine, handsome strain, as all the sails hugged the yards while the gaskets hugged them. Only the hawser sang and twanged and pined and groaned and wondered if it could hold on, as the little black tug said "Come." Now the night was as black as a grid, black as a wolf's throat, black as the Earl of Hell's riding-boots. Perhaps some seaman will say who the Earl of Hell is. For my part I have heard no clear explanation, but imagine him to be an ennobled form of the mere cunning devil. One also hears him called the Vicar. Jack Ellison knew nothing of him, but a devil was out at sea that night, looking for sailors' souls, it may be. For seamen say, as busy as the devil in a gale of wind looking for the souls of sailors. Nevertheless, good seamen escape him, and get to Fiddler's Green, seven miles the other side of hell, where drinks and smokes are chalked up and never paid. To live hard, work hard, and die hard, and go to hell after all would be hard indeed. So they say at sea. It's fairish theology after all, and will hold water, one might think.

But this is being a long time on deck, and, after all, the gale was only breezing up, even yet. It hadn't taken its coat off. Young Jack the Greenhorn was hungry. Even young romance must feed. Out of the clear, clean night, the goodly

godlike wind and the sea-washed salt deck of the great ship, he plunged into her vitals in her 'tween-decks, by way of a booby-hatch betwixt the poop and the main-mast, and found foul and greedy humanity. What difference is there between a ship and the sailing earth? Let some young angel say!

## CHAPTER IV

### THE 'TWEEN - DECKS

THE owners, or charterers rather, of the good ship, had taken a few cubic yards of the 'tween-decks and boarded, bulkheaded, them off from the cargo and the lazarette, and called the space so reserved the steerage and the second cabin. Both reeked already; both were full as a Russian gaol. Men, women, children, boys, girls, and bundles, chests and gear of all sorts, yet unstowed away, littered deck and tables and benches clamped to the deck. Two dim oil-lamps swung from sweating iron beams and illumined the dim den, and smoked in the smoke of damp humans, hot with native fires and indignation. English and Irish were there. One heard northern talk and southern, and the brogue. Cockney, shrill and acute, competed against a Yorkshire burr, and Irish conquered both, for most were from Ireland.

"Good Lord!" said Jack Ellison.

He had been, and was even now, a dandy, particular as to clean shirts and baths. Since he had been a child he had had his own room. This

would do him good, make him understand, make him harder and softer, more sympathetic, and yet more able to endure. Talk about a hurrah's nest! By the nine gods, it wanted a Budd down in that black hole to clear things out and produce order. Men smoked and talked, and women sobbed and cried, and children screamed, and every one, being abstracted from known surroundings, was a lost and useless soul. They yearned for their native mud.

Half the space was the day cabin, half was night. The berths were wonderful, made, it might be, of old packing-cases. The married couples had their two packing-cases. The single men slept four in a wide berth.

"Good God!" said Jack Ellison. He set his white teeth and groaned, inspecting one by one the three with whom he was to share a pleasure trip to the end of the world. One was a gaunt Irishman, Finnegan; the next a north of England nondescript, called Bates; the other, a respectable-looking Londoner, named Walcot, elderly, but half drunk. But most of them were half drunk, some wholly so, some quiescent, fast asleep in the nearest equivalent for a gutter. The deck was a gutter; it was wet and slippery. "'Ave a drink," said Walcot, producing a bottle. "Naow, wiv me," said Bates.

Jack had one with neither. His mind was in a fume, and yet wisdom was at his elbow saying it

was not well to quarrel with them, seeing what they were and what days were before him. He felt too young yet to dominate them. It was either that or holding a candle to such poor devils. After all, they were all in the same boat. He made excuses, said he was drunk already, and turned away. He saw one capable person there, one who knew things; was gay, cheerful, ready. His name was George. He came from the land of the Lord knows where, and was working his passage to his new world as steward of the second cabin and the steerage. What would they have done without George? No one knew any more than they knew his other name. He was thin, active, bright-eyed, laughing, glad to be going somewhere, glad to be doing things.

"Here, get this here truck off the tables, men, and I'll set out the grub," said George. He shoved and pushed and pulled and exhorted and damned their sad or bleary eyes, and produced by magic juggling some kind of awful hash and something called tea. It was served as if to pigs — piglike — but it was food, and there were ship's biscuits not so bad of their kind, and with a pint of hot solution of deck scrapings in him, and a biscuit and some cart grease, Jack felt better. It was his meal of initiation into the great order of the Real World. He slipped a biscuit into his jacket, turned away, and was making for the deck, when he met his first great professor in the art of life.

"Who the devil are you, sonny, and what are you doing in this crowd?" asked his professor, grabbing him by the arm. Some men can do these things; it is a matter of stealing horses and looking over hedges. Bramwell Gray could have stolen barbs from Arab sheiks and have got away with them in honour and glory.

He was very nearly a thoroughbred, judging from points, since one speaks of horses. He was six feet high, and had great breadth of shoulder, square as the main-yard. His skin was of an extraordinary pallor, as if it had never been kissed by the sun (heaven knows it had been kissed by women and yet had not blushed), and there was a red and scarlet flush in the centre of each cheek that spoke of death, which he braved and thought not of. His eyes were bright intense blue, variable as the Mediterranean in spring, and as keen as a Dago's knife, which isn't meant only for cutting seizings with. His features were moulded finely, his chin strong and steady, his nose a fine aquiline, and his neck yet muscular. He was as lean as a greyhound, and, indeed, had the air of a quick hound — active, intelligent, knowing, debauched. As a hound he would have led, but might have killed sheep by night. His intelligence was patent, visible as the sea, as the sky. There was humour not so patent; let us say latent instead. The man had character obviously; the greatest gift man can have, whether it be good or bad. Bram-

well Gray was some one, and the youngster knew it instantly when his hand fell. They were fine hands, white, long, lean, strong, but a little over-large. As to a point they were not bad. He was as vain as the women made him.

"Oh, I —" said Jack. He glanced back at the dim squash in the steerage where George raved and rallied the poor people.

"Come in here," said Bramwell Gray. The boy of nineteen obeyed twenty-seven gravely and with some bashful modesty.

"I'm in the steerage, you know," he remonstrated.

"Come in," ordered the other. It was as though he said:

"I know this place already; let me see any son of a gun object to you and I'll massacre him."

So Jack went in and took a seat.

After all the second cabin was but a smaller den, and as like the steerage as a small boy to his big brother. It was boarded save against the side of the ship, and there the limbers showed. The berths were three, in each two bunks. There were six second-cabin passengers — six fine characters insistent on Australia. They sat there mum-chance or talking, and turned their eyes on their self-elected chief and his catch.

Jack was but a boy, and so green that the cows might have eaten him, and yet, being destined to be some sort of a real man and to know men, he

knew there were but two there, if he modestly left himself out. Four of them were negligible quantities as men, however interesting as refuse, as the emigrating refuse one builds empires with or tries to. But few are the stones that the house-builder rejects which become aught but rubble.

Bramwell Gray, patronizing and beneficent, eyed Jack all over and said he'd do — said so to himself. He was by no means a bad-looking boy; he had a clear, straight eye of red-brown and a mop of brown hair. His skin was on the fair side, yet unburned by the suns of the great world. He was five feet nine, slim but strong. One would say a public-school boy. This was another sort of public school, with strange scholars surely. Some said Jack was handsome, some denied it. He had a big head, square brows, a strong chin, and looked kind but devilish quick. Something might be made of such a boy. The professor interrogated him.

It was like going to school again, like one's first hour in the playground.

He asked him how old he was, what his father was (if he had one living), what he had been, if he was dead, whether he had any brothers, and, if so, what were they doing, how many sisters he had and whether they were pretty or not. And Jack answered civilly, for he liked him.

"I think he's all right," said Bramwell, to the most decent man in the cabin.

"He'll do," said Watson, yawning.

"I'll look after you," said Bramwell.

"Thanks," said Jack. He thought he didn't need it, but didn't mind. This was a strange man, and very taking, a rare kind of devil. Youth was apt to adore him. He might be young, but he had the fine air of knowing things, that youth so admires.

He proceeded to introduce Jack to the others. He talked "like a Dutch uncle;" had an amazing gift of the gab.

"This is Watson," he began; and Watson laughed. "He comes from Middlesbrough, and knows a lot about iron ore, and I think he's all right. The Lord only knows why he left Old England. I have my suspicions that it was something about a she, but he's as close as wax. This other chap is William Walker. If you ask him he'll say his name is Mr. Walker."

Walker grinned uneasily.

"He's a calico printer's clerk," continued Bramwell, coolly, "and lived a life of low debauchery, and to continue it bought things on the firm's account and sold 'em for his own, eh, Walker?"

Walker said he might go to the devil.

"In my own time," said Bramwell. "Now, as you know Walker, let's go on to the pawnbroker."

The poor pawnbroker looked up mildly. He was a feeble, anæmic specimen, apparently consumptive.

"Go easy," he urged.

"A pawnbroker is a fence, you know," said Gray. "He buys things from thieves. Mr. Thomas Beaman got into trouble with the police."

"It's a lie," shouted Beaman.

"Oh, well, if you didn't, we'll let it go," said Gray. "However, young Ellison, you know what he is. This other little chap is called Bates — Fred Bates. His father keeps a cook-shop in Chester."

"He's a swell confectioner," urged Bates. "I told you so this afternoon."

"Keeps a cook-shop," went on Gray, "and this son of his collared money to keep a girl, being married already to a wife who chucked him because he's a rascal."

"Oh, go home," said Bates, turning sulky.

"He's got a sweet tenor voice, a real beauty, so he says," continued the cruel showman.

"So I 'ave," said Bates.

"You shall pipe up presently," said Gray. "And now we come to Hugh Scott."

Scott had a bottle in his hand.

"Go easy or I'll not give you a drink," said Scott.

However, Gray was not very easy with him.

"He's big, as you see, and ought to do some work, but he don't like work, and likes the girls better, and lush, as you see. He's got his deity in his claws now. He's a clerk of some kind, and,

like Mr. Walker here, got into trouble, and to get out of it kindly consented to bestow himself on Australia. You'll get to know him by and by. And as I've introduced the whole box of criminals but myself, I'll follow up by saying that my name's Bramwell Gray (you and Watson may call me Bram if you like, but if any of the others do I'll smash them), and my father's an archdeacon, and I've been five years at sea, but got hurt in a wreck. And after living at home a year I got engaged somehow to two girls, and that's why I'm going out to Australia. So now we all know each other, and Mr. Scott will stand the lush, and Mr. Bates will sing a song, and Mr. Billy Walker will hold his tongue, and we'll have a pleasant night of it. And I tell you honestly we're going to have a blow in the blessed old Bay of Biscay that will scare the guts out of half of you."

He sat down and grabbed the bottle, and little Bates, without any urging, sang "Coming through the Rye" like an angel. Meanwhile, the *Flying Cloud* plunged and wallowed like a pig in a slough, and the women next door moaned and screamed, and the men swore, and the increasing wind howled in the rigging.

"Oh, but this is all right," said Bram, who was obviously the worse or better for liquor. But he was joyous.

It was fine indeed; a splendid first day in a floating school of natural common iniquity.

"Let her scoot," said Bram, "let her rip, I'm glad to be where I've got no girls. I'll sing you a song myself presently, though my voice isn't up to Cookshop's pitch."

After another liquor he sang "Oh, Ruby, my darling," and then wept about a girl called Edith. On inquiry it appeared that she was a woman of the town from which he came.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TUG

It was two bells in the first watch, by which you may understand nine o'clock at night, before Jack escaped from the second cabin and plunged staggering through the wet weeping and hurrahing crowd of the steerage and got on deck again. That he staggered was due less to the mighty power of the bottle than to the rising, risen sea wherein the *Flying Cloud* swashed. Sea legs are a matter of time, as any legs are (as any baby knows), and they don't come by reading sea yarns or by wishing. It's a matter of experience. Man is born on the deck of the great World Ship and learns things: B from a bull's foot; a bull-whanger from an earring; life from death; pleasure from pain. It is no easy learning, mate, and when learned may not be worth it, and even if it is may have to be unlearned again. Finally comes death. One goes overboard. The sea takes one first or last, and what sea it is that's the grave, matters nothing.

And yet the thing is to avoid the grave. There's one fine way: be young. The young have that gift. Youth makes life eternal, the perishable

imperishable, the mortal put on immortality bravely. Death is some one else's always, when one is young as Jack was.

By the Lord and all the gods, how *could* the ship sink with him aboard? Cæsar and his fortunes should float a rammed battle-ship, one would think, if Cæsar were not bald, but well wigged and young.

Jack, hanging on to a pin in the weather rail (not that there was much weather or lee, for the wind was but a trifle on the port bow), considered the second cabin-full and the steerage and the wet decks and flying sea, and shook his head. It was very strange to a well brought up lad. Earth and life opened to him. Some one touched him on the arm. The old Serang stood by him, a grinning mask of Malay, another human not stranger than Bram drinking down below.

"You get wet, eh?" said the Serang.

"Oh, ah," said Jack. He was talking to a real live Malay. Malays in books wore and used kreeses, ran amok, played general hell, did they? A Malay; how fine! To this day Jack remembers. To be spoken to by a common Kling might be an event. But a Malay!

"Down below mush better, ah," said the Serang. "Bimeby him blow big tufan!"

Here was the word for typhoon! It was great to hear it. Let it blow a real one if it would.

"Oh, all right, Serang," he said. He was Eng-

lish, after all, and cool as the wind. But when the old Serang dodged for'ard and was lost in the wet gloom, he kept on saying:

"I've talked with a live Malay."

He recalled the Opium Eater's Malay.

The next who lay hold of him was the Professor Bramwell Gray, very drunk and very keen.

"I've come up to take a look round," said Bram, the seaman.

"I don't think much of the officers and crew," said Bram, mightily superior. He was never too drunk to be in need of showing off. He wanted to impress Jack or any one.

"You don't; why?" asked the Greenhorn, anxiously.

"Damn poor lot of seamen," said Bram, "with half an eye I can see that. Now I was at sea five years and I've been wrecked four times."

Jack was envious. Indeed, Bram had been wrecked once; possibly for all time.

"I know what's what at sea," said Bram. "I've had a main-topgallantmast lying across me, smashing in my ribs. Then in an open boat for five days after that — then pneumonia, and here I am."

He grabbed Jack affectionately.

"I say, old boy, I like you. You're all right. I tell you frankly I like you. What d'ye think of that gang below? I know what you think. Well, I'm drunk, but I'm a gentleman, and my father's

a gentleman and an archdeacon, and I tell you honestly I know a gentleman when I see one, and there's only you and I down below that are that, my son!"

"Ah," said Jack.

"I'm going to stick to you and show you your way about. I know my way about. I tell you honestly, young Ellison, that I'm a scorcher, a real rare devil after lush and the girls, and I know things, I do."

"I can see you do," said Ellison. He meant it. It's very fine to youth to see drink carried well, and Bram carried his as the old *Flying Cloud* could carry canvas. Or he could till he got mad. Then he was a sight. One will see him by and by, when all in the *Flying Cloud*, or most of them, got drunk.

"Oh, yes, I'm not a greenhorn, I'm not," said Bram, fiercely. "I'm no sawney, I'm no sucker. I know things; I'm a rare good devil, too, and stick to my friends. What do I care if you're in the steerage, sonny? Nothing whatever. Do I have any respect for those who go first-class because of that? Not me. I tell you honestly, I like you, and I'm going to show you I do. We'll have a hell of a time this trip. You mark me! It's blowin' a bit."

"Is it a very great gale?" asked sea-innocence.

Bram shook his head scornfully.

"No, no, young fool; it's just a nice breeze, but we'll catch it by and by. I'm goin' to turn in. You'd better do that, too."

It was a prospect Jack did not like. Better the wet and windy deck. And yet he grew tired. Perhaps his lessons were too much for him. He crawled down below and found the steerage steaming with damp, draggled humanity. The atmosphere half put out the dreary swinging lamps. He found his berth-mates turned in. Walcot was drunk and objectionable, and suddenly Jack got savage. He sometimes did.

"I'll stick a knife into you," he said, furiously. Before he started on his wide-world adventures he had bought a knife in a sheath and a revolver. What could one do without a revolver and a knife? According to all books, they were more necessary than clothes.

"I'll stick you," said Jack. Walcot, who was half as big again as he, shrank from him and shut up. It was a great lesson in the immortal art of bluff, which is more necessary than guns and knives or clothes. Jack never forgot it. He slept half clothed. It was all hoggish, unimaginably hoggish, but it was adventure; it was doing what his old friends weren't doing; it would make some dear silly girls cry to see him.

He was proud of his fine discomfort. It was great to be in a den in the bowels of a real ship on a real ocean, while it blew a real old howler up

above and sent the seas swashing on board. He grunted like a ship and pitched headlong into sleep.

He slept till five o'clock next morning. Rather he died, as men sometimes say. Sleep wasn't the word. Let Walcot squirm, and Finnegan groan as he prayed to the Holy Mother and lamented his native bogs, Jack slept forgetful of all things, cradled by the surges. There was something native in the sea for him.

On deck at midnight Mackintosh and Budd had speech with each other, while the wind howled. They took things as they came, but foresaw things coming as wise seamen do.

"It'll be a snorter, sir," said Budd.

"A rip-snorter," replied old Mac. He almost had to shout. It wasn't whispering weather, by any means. The low sky, black but blackly visible, raced to the northeast, with rags and wisps flying and flogging the sea. There was no let up to it now; the wind meant business; apparently it would stand no nonsense on shore, whatever wisdom and management could do at sea.

"She'll let go at dawn," said Mac. He meant the invisible tug, pulling at the end of the curved hawser that grew right ahead, when the Malay quartermaster didn't let her yaw. The tug's light showed like a mad star while she wallowed and drove at it.

"At dawn, sir," said Budd. That would be the real beginning.

"A scorcher," sighed Mac to himself, "a real fizzler."

There was regret and joy in him. He did not like the seas when they were mere dusty roads of duty. Say what we will, the man in health loves to be tried. He rises to unimaginable heights under great stresses. And yet there's always a fear of failure in the deeps of the heart. It's not death one fears; that shall be maintained at all hazards; it's to die beaten. Yet there are cowards, of course. Something is wrong with their hearts, poor fellows! There's no such suffering as the coward's. Let those brave men, who in awful dreams have met the darkest horrors of the under-soul of life, declare their woes as they sweated ice and trembled. It's far worse than any death, even at the stake; worse even than outward disgrace. Fear is the disgrace of the soul itself, if soul there be; of the inwardness of man that keeps the citadel against the enemy.

The two seamen, one old and one young, for Budd was under thirty and Mac nigh fifty (and his last thirty-five years contained more than most three hundred days and a year's Sundays), had one trouble. It was a trouble that could hardly be spoken of. Discipline forbade it, and both were disciplined men, without a doubt. They considered not the outside forces, not the gale, not

the wind or sea, not the frame of the ship, and her gear and tackling, but rather her head, the fount of authority, the captain himself. They said (without saying it, for it's mere wordless knowledge):

"Here we are in the hands of the winds and the heights and hollows of the sea, and at dawn we cast loose for a great fight. Both of us are good men and know things; there's no obvious weakness in us, thanks to God, save some love of liquor at times, it may be. Nevertheless, we are but men, and require, by the conditions of the sea, that the captain shall be a man and back us, and be ready if our bodies give way (our hearts shall never, we trust). And what kind of a man is he to whom Destiny has appointed the task of chief? We fear he's but a broken reed, a poor thing, though he can, we know, carry sail like a devil, or a Yankee. There's something we don't understand about him. There's no ground of confidence between us. And yet what's wrong with him?"

Indeed, that was the trouble. They could not say what was wrong, and yet they yearned to discuss what it was.

"The captain's not been on deck since three bells," said Mac.

"He's a good sleeper, sir," replied the second mate, doubtfully.

"And never drinks. Teetotal," said old Mac.

Imagine that! He shook his head; it was a very monstrous thing.

"Folks say it's a good thing, sir."

"Good — oh, in its place, Mr. Budd. But when a man fears liquor —"

"I see, sir," said the second mate, thoughtfully.

"Damn me if I fear sulphuric acid, Mr. Budd," said old Mac. "Cocoa's all right, you know. I can drink hot cocoa, well sweetened, in the middle watch or in the gravy-eye watch; but cocoa always —"

It was certainly monstrous.

"Oh, cocoa," said Budd. He spat to loo'ard, where white seas boiled under her counter. "I prefer coffee or —"

What did it matter? The thing was what did the skipper prefer, what did he fear, what was his weakness? That couldn't be discussed yet. When it is being discussed authority gets weak indeed.

"Well, I'll turn in," said the mate. "I hope the hawser will hold. I had it fresh parcelled and freshened the nip a trifle. See that sleepy-headed Serang keeps awake. So long!"

He dived below, pulled off his oilskins and sea-boots, dived into blankets and the deep sea of sleep.

"He don't trust the 'old man,'" said Budd. "What's wrong with him?"

He had time to consider, for everything was

shipshape, everything ready when the time came. But consider as he would, he found no clue, though he touched a possible one.

"No seaman should bring his wife to sea with him," said Budd. "It's a rotten bad practice, and if I were an owner —"

It's a great sea-dream that! To be an owner and arrange things as they should be arranged. Budd proceeded to own a number of fine ships, and he fed the cabin properly; saw that his dream property was well manned with good white men, and sailed one himself and broke the record to Australia and home. Then he married himself to a dear girl of Devon, whom he loved, and begat boys who grew up and commanded ships themselves in their time.

"I wish I was skipper now and that Mary was with me," said the inconsistent second mate. He sighed and woke.

"We've a rare, queer, rotten crowd here," he said, "and the passengers are a holy lot of ruffians and bog-trotters. Damn all passengers, say I!"

To the devil with them, says the seaman, unless he's in a passenger packet, devoted to that mean branch of his art. And as for dirty seasick emigrants, there used to be a special unprintable word for them, and may be now, for all I know. Next to a soldier, a seaman thinks a passenger the most contemptible of created beings. He's a poor,

miserable, seasick, staggering, useless devil, who doesn't know the fore-sheet from the fore-bitts, and can be made a fool of by the boys. Can anything be lower than that? The proper work of a seaman is to take ships to and fro in the great waters and to carry cargo. To be lumbered up with bog-trotters, to have one's nice clean decks rammed and jammed and crammed with feculent exiles — oh, it's cruel!

Meanwhile the *Flying Cloud*, like a dog at the end of a string, went out to sea. So long as Budd kept his eyes skinned, he had nothing to do but keep himself warm and see that the *Sukkanee* at the wheel didn't let her yaw and snatch too much at the hawser. Once he went for'ard to take a look at the service in the nip. But, as Mac had veered out a fathom to freshen it, that was all right. Budd went aft again and climbed the windy poop and yawned.

"Mary, Mary, this is a rotten life," said the second mate.

He wanted something to do. It was nearly as bad as an anchor-watch. He put in the time as best he could, knowing that there would be work presently. About two bells in the morning watch it would be "Hands, make sail!" That meant Budd would have an hour in and would then turn out again.

"My luck," said Budd. It was seaman's luck, after all, and as soon as he got the wind on his

cheeks he'd be all right. He wiped spray out of his eyes, and sucked his moustache dry, and walked to the break of the poop.

There was a man in the lookout, himself at the break of the poop, the quartermaster at the wheel, and not another soul visible. A faint suggestion of a dim lamp came from the open starboard door of the foc'sle. Inside the men slept in their clothes. They lay about on chests, some in their bunks, some sat up and smoked. The oilskins shone as they swayed in the heave of the sea. They looked, as they hung on nails, like hanged men, headless men. There was a stink of dirt and oil and fish, "salt ling," about the foc'sle. Some water came in spurts from the hawse-pipes partially plugged with sacks and canvas. The cables were still bent; who knew what might happen, with England and Ireland on the lee and such a gale on hand? A stream flowed through the foc'sle at times. Once that night the plugs were flung out by the sea. The decks got clean that time, and the men cursed in six languages. They prayed for fine weather and the sun. What a devil of a life it was to bring the children of the sun into black northern seas. White men would have cursed and grumbled and growled, and yet have been happy. Half of these, when it was cold, were cowards. As the morning came on the air grew chill; the blood congealed. But presently the *tindel*, or bo'sun's mate, struck eight bells

There was a sign of dawn in the east. Budd stamped on the deck, careless now of his steps, though he was over Mackintosh's cabin. He got a good relief.

"You'll get an hour," said old Mac. "But the glass still falls, I see, another tenth while I was below."

"Humph!" said Budd, as he went below. He, too, fell asleep all standing but his oilskins and his sea-boots, and ere his head touched the pillow (as he would have sworn) the old Serang had him by the shoulder. It was a case of "*Sub admi uthao*," "Call all hands." The skipper was on deck. Men ran hurriedly; the hollow decks resounded. Strange cries came from for'ard; the foc'sle vomited its crowd. Down below Jack waked suddenly in a kind of fine nervous terror and awe.

"What is it?" he said. By Jove! it was something to learn. He slipped out of his berth, put on his boots, and crawled on deck.

There are big hours in all men's lives, even the smallest. Your poorest-spirited creature of mere mean commerce in some narrow street of town shall remember the first day he smelt merchandise and heard the roar of men and traffic and knew that here was life beginning. Young Ellison recalled that hour as cold and big, in which the astounding revelation had been made to him that he (and no one else) was responsible for himself; that he was to stand alone, to earn his food and

the right to a place to sleep in. That was a frosty moment; it was to lose the first illusion of all, to be turned out stark naked to the east and north winds. Up till then the world, his father, his uncle, who you will, had to keep and feed him, owing to the very nature of things which he neither understood nor cared to understand. But now he heard the east wind and felt it, and stood aghast, shrinking, and then marched like a poor young soldier, gathering courage as he could, as he might, stealing it as he watched other men.

So it was a big hour when he put on his hat and said that the uncle was no uncle of his. But then he was hot with rage, with a magnificent resentment. He would have faced death itself, rather than give in. The girls might cry. By the gods! they had to, and he had to go. There was nothing else for it. It was painful, and yet big, as he faced the street and knew he had no home.

But here, as he thrust his head out of the reek of the steerage and climbed on deck into the pure gale, there was no pain, only splendid curiosity and eagerness, and the joy which wants nothing to live upon but free action and the taste of knowledge. He forgot the gross facts of existence, forgot the steerage, forgot the ancient peace of home, forgot those hours when he had striven with the Greeks and Romans in the dusty ways of great dead men, and opened his lungs to life. Rain and the sea-salt sea-spray slapped

his brown fair cheek to rose; the taste was nectar, and nepenthe for the past. When life seems all future, then's the time!

It was still dark, though there was a gleam among the low driven clouds in the east. There was no sense of light in the ship, but one was sensible of growing light very far off. The ruby port light still threw a tinge of blood upon the waters, but the green light appeared faded, a little wanner. The reeling, staggering light of the tug as she pitched and climbed again the vast opposing slope of the sea was less like a star — less peremptory in its summons to follow. It seemed to grow tired, weary. And then the wan dawn showed over a leaping waste of white water. The waves to loo'ard were like hounds beneath a whip, those to windward like a pack of wolves.

Now the crew sprang to their work. The full decks, yet dark and dreary and awash with the assaulting seas, were haunted by phantoms — by little oilskin-clad dwarfs with white eyeballs shining in dark faces. Most were little; even the yelling Serang was short; only the *tindels*, or bo'sun's mates, both Malays, were tall. No one but the Serang and they seemed to know a hal-liard from a down-haul. There was a cold sense of driven stupidity among the Lascars; they were not awake yet, not alive; they crouched beneath the blast and shivered. To half of them the prospect of going aloft in such a time was dread-

ful. They might be seamen, but they were the seamen of fair bright seas, not the northern gray waters of storm wherein England lies moored. As the men ran hither and thither, half of them bent on any avoidance of duty, half of them scheming to stay on deck when the order was for them to lay aloft and loose the topsails, a *tindel* appeared dragging one cur by the hair and kicking him. He had been hauled up from the forepeak by the hair and ears. The Serang saw and kicked the wretched Kling as he passed. He and the *tindels* seemed to be men.

To give her a long scope, the tug had been towing with her own hawser and the *Flying Cloud's*. They had been bent together with a carrick bend. The bend was visible twenty fathoms from the ship's bows. When that came on board and was cast adrift the voyage would properly begin. But before that was done, it was necessary to trim the yards on the starboard tack. The wind was shifting and would veer to the west, and even now it swung a point and blew harder still. The easterly sky opened into a peculiar glare of colour; far away there was a heavy, oily, threatening, coloured dawn. The red of it glared through the driving clouds, and in one spot tinged the waste of gray water for a moment. Then it fled, and it was day. The tug blew her whistle, and the sound of it came down wind sharp and clear. The skipper stood at the break of the poop with

old Mackintosh. Jack heard them speak, and then he heard an unintelligible order in the mongrel Hindostanee of ships. He saw Budd on the starboard side at the fore-braces. The men ran to the port side, some pattered up the ladders to the poop. The tug blew her whistle again, and starboarding her helm, went in a long circle towards the south. There was another order; the Serang yelled, and the men at the braces lay back and hauled, singing, "*Ay-la*," and the yards swung round. Then the Serang cried out again, and some of the Khalasis sprang aloft with their bare feet. They ran up the ratlines, clambered over the rim of the top by the futtock-shrouds, and in a moment were on the fore and main top-sail yards. The tug tightened up the hawser on her new course. The wind was now broad on the starboard bow.

In the dim light of the growing day Jack Ellison watched eagerly as he stood right under the break of the poop, between the ladders. There he was out of everybody's way. He saw the little men on the yards, and was pleased to see them. It must be fine to be up there. He felt that he wanted to go. He knew he would be afraid, but was not much afraid of that. He saw them cast off the gaskets. The neatly furled sails fell from the yards into their gear, the taut buntlines and leach-lines. The wind got at them, bellied them out; they filled like bladders and tugged at all

that held them. He had read much of the sea and knew the names of many things. But it was with immense difficulty that he deciphered the script of the ancient mystery of the sea. When he did understand, he went warm and was proud of himself. He might have said innocently, "Of course, I see that's a buntline." The words of the sea craft were magnificent to him; they were finer than Roman history and better and greater than art; and as to Greek tragedy, why the wrath of Ajax was nothing to the live anger of the sea gods.

It was almost as much as a man could hope that he should set a lower topsail and get it sheeted home safely.

The "old man" never feared. That's the odd mystery of Captain Dundas. He was immensely brave at risking canvas, cool as cucumber in a cold salad at the risk of his sticks, and yet — we shall see. They slacked away the lee clew of the lower main-topsail, overhauled the gear and hauled the sheet home. Then the weather clew and the sheet and the sail was set. The strength of it was mighty. The *Flying Cloud* shook herself and steadied. There was a difference at once, even before she felt the lower fore and mizzen topsails. There was a different sound and song of the wind; a deep humming note of the draught of the gale on the bolt-ropes and in the bellies of the sails. She lay over, drew ahead, and as she carried an

ardent weather helm, they set the fore-topmast-staysail.

"She's sailing," said the Greenhorn.

By the lords of the sea, she slacked up her hawser and was beginning to overrun it! The skipper spoke and the Serang squealed in his high falsetto, and the men ran for'ard on the foc'sle head to haul in the hawser.

"*Ay — lah — Allah — ay — la,*" sang the little wet Lascars. It was no dry pull in any sea sense. They got it in inch by inch. It was wonderful to see the little oilskin-clad devils drag, and to hear them howling their single melancholy sad sea-shanty. Jack could stand it no longer; he ran to the lee rail as she made a weather roll, and clambered for'ard, holding on to the pins in the rail. She was letting go the tug, letting go England, letting go the old, old world, and hey, for another! The glamour of the ancient deep historic storied seas got hold of him; his eyes gleamed with spray and glad wild tears at the amazing incidents of life that he had dreamed of and never dreamed of! He was so hungry to do and be and see, that there was a wonder about all things, magic in sea-boots, in the gleam of oilskins, in the bare sea-wrinkled feet of poor little Khalasis. He staggered abreast of the galley, saw the shining pots and pans there in the steam of food and drink, and the faces of the calm sea-cooks, the *Bhandaris*, and was flung against the deck-house.

He grabbed an iron cleat there; saw steps up and climbed among the pile of frapped stunsail-booms. He sat down breathless, eager, and watched.

They got the hawser inch by inch, for forty men were on it and a big tackle as well. It came in and was snaked down on the fore hatch. The bend came at last, and was eased in by as many hands as could reach it. A knife went through the seizings of the bend and the tug took her own. She hauled it in by steam, and screamed a triumphant farewell. With her helm over she came round and passed to loo'ard. She pitched like a mad thing and beat the seas to foam. To loo'ard went black smoke. She showed below her bends, showed her very keel, kicked out a paddle into the air, lurched and recovered. Her skipper on the little bridge waved his hand and evidently yelled; what he said no one knew. No doubt it was "Good luck to you!"

The *Flying Cloud* was free, and it was broad daylight. The hours had passed as the wind passed, as the foam flew. In the great hours there's no time; they are all of eternity.

## CHAPTER VI

### UNDER CLOSE - REEFED TOPSAILS

YOUNG Ellison was set free with the ship. Or so it seemed to him. He drew a great breath — as it were the winds of life filled his sails. He said “ Oh! ” tremendously; it was a gasp, such a gasp as that with which the new-born opens up its virgin lungs. He could have yelled, yelled with an unspeakable, painful joy, which was acute, tearing, the rending of the last adhesion to the things known of old.

The *Flying Cloud* lay over to the wind, which blew from the south-southwest by now, with her head to the southeast by south. But every moment now she came up a little, for the wind was veering. Soon she pointed south-southeast, and then there was a fresh hand to the bellows. The gale had been steadier, but now it brought a fresh supply of energy, and a squall ripped out of the sou'west quarter which made the ship stagger and, as it were, catch her breath. Her wake was a bit broad on the weather quarter as the tug went by, but when the quartermaster got true hold of her, and the wind steadied again, she hung on the wind like a yacht and ate her way to wind-

ward. She was always a weatherly craft, and on a bowline could hold her own with any. Now her decks were on a slope; an intense strain took her weather shrouds and stays; the song of the wind in them was glorious. That the Greenhorn had heard in the night; now he heard the hiss of the divided seas, the hiss of the seas alongside, to leeward. The bubbling water came in through the scuppers and lay a foot above the covering board. It was wonderful. There was a brightness in the eyes of those who felt the strain of things and the sober joy of action wedded to knowledge years ago. Old Mac felt it, so did Budd, so even did the "old man."

"She's a mighty fine old hooker," said Mackintosh, thoughtfully.

The crews dodged about the sloping slippery decks of the ship (there's no more slippery wood than wet teak), and hung the coiled gear on the pins. The coils swung to and fro as the vessel lifted and pitched. There was a liveness about everything. That was the beauty of it — the splendour of it. The ship was in action and Europe was her lee shore. She had to get away from Europe as if the whole continent were her enemy. It would batter her to pieces, to flinders, to noggin staves and matchwood. Ushant was her deadly foe and Land's End lay in wait for her; the wet wild Scillies stood at pounce, and Ireland was no friend of hers. Out yonder lay the open sea, and the

wind said "No" with a tremendous power at the back of it. The Greenhorn was splendidly dazed and full of joy. His hands opened and shut as though he wanted to lay hold. She and he almost loved each other. He at any rate had a passion for her great appearance, her strength, the powerful rigging, the lofty slender masts, her yards that were so square. The sails were a joy, so well cut, well set and tense as a drum. The wind drummed there.

"Ah!" he sighed. It was with a strange relief that he heard a man speak and found the white-faced, hectic-cheeked sailorman Bramwell Gray at his elbow.

"Well, young fellow," said Bram. He smiled benignantly, and smiled even more pleasantly when Jack said:

"I say, this is very fine, you know!"

There's language for one, mean miserable language that has to do so much! He felt as if he had left the earth, was in the skies, was a disembodied splendid spirit in a sailing star and had to say: "This is very fine, you know." It breaks one's heart to think of writing, when one can't put down the shining eyes, the red flush of spray-washed cheeks, the blown hair and the red parted lips whereon he tasted the brine. It was a baptism of a great young child, and in the ocean font the baby paddled divinely and said, "Oh, I say, you know!" Tut, tut!

"Oh, let her scoot," said Bram, with a rude carelessness. But he spoke out of a joyous familiarity with ships and the rude brave seas. The Greenhorn understood a little of this, for he saw the other was glad and had courage. "Let her scoot, sonny; I believe she can move a bit."

The chorus of the winds and the sea moved him a bit, obviously. He grasped the lad's arm.

"I say, young Ellison, this is better than Leeds, eh? Better than Liverpool and Manchester."

There are great things there though, after all.

"Oh, yes," said the boy, who saw no great things in a city yet, and perhaps might die before he discovered divinity even in dust and ashes, or dust and ashes in the divine, when illusion goes by.

"It's magnificent," said Jack.

"This young one's all right," said Bram, to himself.

"I always wanted to be a sailor, you know," said Jack.

"More damn fool you," replied the other. "But I don't know."

He wasn't sure.

"How did you sleep in your hog's den, sonny?" he asked. But Jack had forgotten the hog's den and the hogs.

"I've been on deck since five," he said, still open-mouthed at the sea. Bram instructed him in the time of ships and the mystery of the bells.

"I came on deck at two bells in the morning watch, eh?" said Jack, much pleased to know.

"Right, my son," said Bram. He added: "I say, we're going to have a stinger, young 'un. You see if we don't. She'll be hove to before night, I shouldn't wonder. We'll catch pepper, the finest hot cayenne. I know the Bay, and we'll beat out there in time to catch it very hot."

"There's going to be a worse storm than this?" asked the Greenhorn.

"Oh, this is nothing to speak of. 'Tis only a breeze. If we were before the wind we'd be showing our t'gallan's'ls," said Bram. "But you'll see it by and by; my word, yes! I wish I could have a squint at the glass."

The glass talked very straight inside the saloon cabin. It said uncommonly strong things, and moved downwards with a steady persistency that made those who saw it drop and noted its concave surface look as serious as the weather quarter. The skipper knocked it doubtfully, and then put on an expression like a mask. Whatever his weakness was, that was his strength.

"The glass?" asked Jack.

"The barometer," said Bram. "I say, it's breakfast time."

The stewards brought grub and hot coffee along the decks. Jack wondered at them. They moved from pin to pin along the weather rail and carried things lightly. It was strange to see their dark

faces, their gentleness, their prepossession in their tasks. George, the 'tween-deck steward, came flying careless of the rail. He had the sea legs of one born in the seas of the Cape itself. He might have been bred on the roaring edge of the Agulhas Bank. He winked bravely at Bram and the boy as he made a rush for the booby-hatch, and brought up there, when a lee roll began, as if he were at anchor.

"Grub, oh," said George, with aplomb. He was quite happy, no happier man on board that day, and yet many were happy in their hearts of men at the go of things. Old Mac looked happy enough. Jack, as he made a sliding clumsy rush for the hatch, saw him. It was comforting to see him, and would have comforted one who feared.

Down below in the squalid gloom of the 'tween-decks there were other squalls than those on deck. There children howled lugubriously, women still cried, and many men looked white and wan and terror-stricken. They were children of the inside solid lands, and now they were lost. The grub was horrid, most scandalous, but since many could not eat, there was much of it. Jack drank some black wash called coffee, tried some kind of hash and rejected it, and came rapidly to the conclusion that for many a long day his food would be mostly ship's biscuit. He ate, and noticed his fellows. There was a lost, sad, fat man called Higginson, by nature gross and jovial, but by the

sea purged of grossness and joy. He hung to the table lamentably. Finnegan, the long raw Irishman, who was one of Jack's bunk-mates, had a beautiful raw Irish sister, who should be ruddy and had violet eyes. There were other undecipherable nondescripts. One had a skin of apple jelly, which he divided in a generous way. He offered some to Jack, who found it good. The apple-jelly man turned out to be a locksmith's apprentice. He was one of a few who were not seasick.

When Jack had stowed away black wash and biscuits in his own hold, he went to the door of the second cabin and was hailed by Bram and made to come in. He wanted to know Bram. He was as strange as the seas. The youngster had never met any one like him, and was fascinated by Bram's air of enlarged wisdom. Now Jack despised Greek and Latin and trigonometry. It was a finer thing to read the book of the sea than all the works in a college library. Bram knew something and could teach it. He had a splendid opinion of himself. Perhaps it was justified. Already he was boss of the second cabin. Though he held no officer's ticket, he had been to sea, and the freemasonry of the most ancient craft of all introduced him to old Mac and Budd, who tried to size him up and so far failed. They had discussed him.

"That's a scorcher, Mr. Budd," said Mac.

"Why, sir, he's a rare devil, I'll lay my sea-boots," said Budd.

Here were two men of the sea, salted men, one of them as salt as salt-horse, and both fine fellows, acknowledging that a second-class passenger in the stinking 'tween-decks was a scorcher, and a rare devil. That's ripe acknowledgment indeed. What wonder was it that the Greenhorn thought him a marvel!

"If there's mischief, he'll make it," said Mac.

"Regular cut of a sea lawyer, sir," said Budd. "But a good plucked one, I should say, white as he is."

"Been ill," said Mac.

"Earned it, likely, sir," said Budd. "But he's a fizzler."

Budd sighed. The sense of responsibility was on him. He recalled the happy days when he was a fizzler himself, before he had his ticket, before he loved one girl better than another, when he could cheerfully get drunk with the boys anywhere.

In the second cabin they had a symposium and started drinking early. Bram produced a bottle of whiskey, and they talked against the howling of the wind. They drank out of cups and mugs and glasses, and hung on the swaying table, and listened to Bram's dicta about the sea and the ship and the officers and life in gen-

eral. As he drank the scarlet patches on his cheeks brightened and his eyes were like lamps. The others hung on his words.

"Look here, boys, we're going to have a devil of a time in this old barkey. She's a daisy at sailing. I give you my word she can scoot. You'll see something. I know all about the sea, boys, and ships. I've sailed in three, and have been wrecked. A rib went into my lungs; I was in bed a year. Now I'm all right. I'm pals with the officers already, boys. Old Mackintosh the mate is a rare old sea-dog, and the second ain't bad. The skipper I've not talked to; I can't make him out. He's not up to much. But they say he's a rare 'un to carry sail. Look here, I tell you, boys, some chaps would heave her to now, or even run for shelter. You greenies are going to see something. I've been hove to in the Bay before, and to-night you'll see a scorcher. It'll be 'sing out and stand from under.' This blacky crowd don't suit me. I don't trust 'em. Lascars ain't the proper sort of men. Give me white men. They'll be cutting Walker's throat — eh, Walker? Here, I say, go steady with the liquor, Walker, or I'll cut your throat myself. When that's done, we're dependent on the skipper. They say he's a tee-totaller, and he mightn't like to let us have any. Oh, Lord! I wish I was back at home with all the girls. Bates, sing a song, you singing, cock-eyed rotter, or I'll roll you on the deck."

So Bates sang most divinely, and the poor folks in the steerage hushed their moaning and groaning to hear him, and for a moment the song of a mean little hound who had an angel in his throat made them forget their woes.

"You pipe like a blooming nightingale," said Bram, soberly. "I love to hear you, you howling scum of a cook-shop!"

There was a little space of silence and they smoked quietly. The racing sea obscured the port-hole greenly, though they were on the weather side. Every moment the gale increased. It was a very strong breeze indeed.

"Have you seen the skipper's wife?" asked Hugh Scott presently.

"No," said Bram, eagerly enough; "what's she like?"

"She's a ripper," said Scott, winking, "a real ripper, black hair and eyebrows, and the skin of a ripe apple, boys. I saw her on the deck yesterday, and asked who she was. She's a real handsome piece, but a proper devil of a woman, I'll lay."

"Phew," said Bram, "it's the gray mare is the better horse then. The 'old man's' mild enough; he might be a Quaker, bar the hat. I'd like to have a look at the lady. Got a kid, too, eh?"

That was a fact, and Bram cursed.

"Of all the holy rotten things to do, it is for a

seaman to come to sea with a wife and kids! Holy Sailor, it makes me ill! However, I'll make love to her myself, by and by."

He seemed capable of that or anything else.

"She'll scare you," said Scott.

"Neither a she-devil nor a man can scare me," said Bram, fiercely.

"Girls have been my ruin," said Scott, sighing.

"And mine," chimed in Walker, eagerly.

Bram looked at him.

"You don't say so! What kind of a girl?"

"A real ripper, I can tell you," said Walker, shaking his head. "Oh, I did love her, too!"

Bates said nothing; perhaps he was thinking of the girl he had left his wife for. However, he spoke at last.

"They just love to hear me sing," he said, sadly.

"I'm engaged to be married," said the presumptive pawnbroker. "I've got her photograph in my pocket."

"Show us," said Walker, "and I'll show you the piece that I played up with and lost my job over."

So Beaman showed his poor girl, who was a decent creature, about whom he had woven all the romance in his secret heart.

"If I get well, she'll come out to me," said Beaman.

"It's a blasted poor lookout for her," said

Walker. But Bram threatened to kick him. The cad produced his photograph.

"I can tell her sort," said Bram. "Where's her beat?"

"She's better than a lot of straight pieces I know," said Walker, furiously. They let it go at that.

"Have you a girl, young Ellison?" asked Bramwell.

Ellison blushed.

"Oh, not exactly. There's one I like better than most, though," he said, modestly.

"I wish I liked only one," gloomed Bram. "My trouble is the number. If I could have loved one I'd have stayed at home and gone in for being a doctor. But I must have two at least, you see, and I had two fathers and two sets of brothers after me. And for some reason the women are very keen on me."

He spoke sadly enough, but turned to Watson.

"Well, old keep-your-own-counsel, have you a girl or two or three?" he asked.

Watson declared he hadn't even one and was glad of it.

"What's the good of having a poor girl hanging on when one goes out to Australia?" asked Watson, half-savagely.

Then Walker started the conversation on an improper tack and made young Ellison very uncomfortable. But he sat tight. Something told

him that he had to learn everything. And, after all, bawdry is only an unhappy necessary by-product of life.

It was nearly noon before he went on deck again.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE "BREEZE"

UNTIL a wind grows to a gale indeed, seamen call it a breeze, and even after it's full grown, provided there is no aspect of terror beyond use and knowledge. When the sky and sea, tormenter and tormented, are as one, a sailorman may speak of a gale, that landsmen call a storm. That is the rare word at sea, and seldom used, seeing that landsmen, the poor ignorant creatures, have debauched it to base uses, calling a fine working breeze a storm, as if any landsman could ever face one! When the wind rises it is a breeze, say, and when the wind rises formidably it becomes, perhaps, a gale; and after that, when the sea and wind seem one, it may be called in soberness a heavy gale. After that, by big gradations, one comes to the time when the heaviest sea, though awful and dangerous, seems as nothing to the living power of the air. That very sea is beaten down and flattened, and it rolls in fierce frightened foam; and then again rises and is beaten, and the wind seems solid, becomes a difficult medium for the bravest lungs to breathe in, when the frightful cries of the hunted ship are scarce

heard, and a man's mind is hard to be known, and action is difficult, and thought amazed, and the end held off at arm's-length in desperation that becomes calm at last. These things are called cyclones and typhoons, and haunt the vexed tropic seas of the Bermudas, or the wilder latitudes of the North Atlantic, and the China Seas. There are a thousand names for the angry air; they are Tornados, Pamperos, White Squalls and Black, and Northers. These are the sudden foes of seamen. They break ships quickly and pass, many of them, in one great breath. But the greater storms prepare themselves and may be foreseen. They haunt known places on the sea and give warning to the wise. They are fair, and knowing their power, can afford it.

Here on the edge of the Bay it blew a "breeze," a seaman's breeze, almost one that a ship could face with her topsails, if her men were strong and hearty and aware. But it needed knowledge and a good ship, sound and sea-kindly, one that could hang on and be weatherly and not too wet, having fine enough lines to beat to windward without making too much leeway, like an old cask thrown overboard. She had also to be stowed with knowledge and care, and, therefore, the first "breeze" is an anxious trial to the young second mate, who, under Providence and his superiors, feels responsible that she's not too stiff or too crank. With one she may roll her masts out,

with the other turn turtle, and be heard of no more. Then she shall be posted as "Missing," and many poor souls on land shall hope without hope and seek for news of her in vain.

The *Flying Cloud* was a fine sight that day at noon, for there's no finer thing on view on the round world than a big sailing ship under sail when it blows hard. She partakes of all natures, of man's nature and the nature of the world itself; she is made and yet alive, built and yet natural. There is nothing more pitiful than a dead ship, one killed by the land; no skeleton in the desert more awful than her ribs and her jutting timbers as she lies half buried. But here she was alive, and on her poop were live men, her strength and soul and salvation. Jack Ellison clambered out bright-eyed and awestruck, and made for his station under the poop ladders. At that moment old Mackintosh came down to get his dinner. He looked at the lad and smiled. His cheeks were wet and shone, his oilskins streamed; his thin whiskers, cut short, were like gray bespangled grass at dawn after dew. He stopped and spoke.

"Well, young man, don't you think you'd be better down below?" he asked, good-naturedly.

"Oh, I like being on deck, sir," said the boy. He had to be respectful to a man like that. His nature told him what to respect. The admiration that was in him was an instinct. He added:

' It's very fine, this, sir."

"This" was the sea and the ship. Old Mac's used-up heart of the sea responded a little. He nodded kindly.

"Don't get washed overboard," he said, and disappeared.

"A pretty good boy that," he said, to himself. Then he fell to work on food, and sank, burned, and destroyed a fleet of sea-dishes.

"That's the kind of man I should like to be," said Jack. The old shellback was rude and rough, not a gentleman, not soft of speech, but covered with salt, horny-handed, even tarry, and yet out of all the incrustations of him shone a fine fellow, one indomitably big, something quite real, not a sham about him. Probably he never thought of himself. That's the big secret of men. The best conceit of ourselves is none; that's as true as the southwest wind. Civilization is self-consciousness, and rots us.

There was little or nothing of work doing. "More rain, more rest," they say at sea and on farms, and till the wind makes work, it's true.

The Khalasi crew for'ard stayed in the foc'sle; only the cooks and their mates dodged the seas that came over the weather rail in fine heavy dollops, though rarely green yet. Everything was as wet as if the ship had dived. For'ard she did dive, and scooped up some of the Atlantic be-

tween the knight-heads. It ran off the t'gallant foc'sle in a stream to loo'ard. The scuppers were still under water; the sea bubbled on deck. She lay over more even than she had done; there was a bigger strain on her; her topsails boomed; the song of the taut rigging was keen. The braces and gear were blown out to loo'ard in splendid curves. There was nothing but the coils of the halliards and the rest of the gear on the pins that took no strain. There was a fine unity about the ship and a glorious sense of power. She was equal to the demands made upon her. And yet the wind increased.

She was finely built, had a fine entrance, and what's as important, or even more important, a fine run. She did not dive too deep, but yet met the seas sweetly, dividing them not without foam, but without too much rage. The seas came aft and met again astern of her, and seemed to thrust her forward.

"She's a great ship; the finest," said Jack. She was his ship, the only one he knew. His feet were on her decks. He could have sung boldly.

"Why, I could shout," he thought, wondering at himself. He did not understand that he was young and strong, and as equal as the ship he loved to all the demands made on him by the wind and the sea. He was conscious that the great windy world was magnificent; that he was

magnificent, too. He wanted to go to the captain and ask if he couldn't do something, if you please, sir. Perhaps by and by —

He had a round ship's biscuit in his pocket, and ate it as he hung on to the poop ladder and swayed with the roll and pitch of the ship. What was dinner but hog-wash and hog-food in a sty? This was heaven itself. He proposed to become a seaman, if he was not too old. By and by he would speak to old Mac and ask him. There must have been sea-salt in his blood.

By and by the wrinkled Serang, who looked sixty and was perhaps forty, came past him and grinned amicably. Jack felt pleased. He had no feelings against "niggers." This was a seaman. The old chap scrambled up the lee poop ladder, and no doubt talked about something with the skipper. Presently he came back and stood alongside the Greenhorn.

"Blow much, eh?" said the Serang, with a grin.

"Oh, pretty hard," replied the boy.

"What your name, eh?" asked the Serang.

"Ellison."

"Oh, Elzon, Elzon. I de Serang, Elzon."

He lifted his left forefinger and pointed at his breast.

"I — Serang, Elzon!"

A great thing to be Serang, for the Serang is the boatswain or bo'sun, and a good bo'sun is a

great person. He knows everything but mathematics, and can do everything but strap a cat-block, which isn't a seaman's job, be it known to you.

"By-by him blow hard, I tink, Elzon," said the little Serang, with his nose up to windward and his little pig's eyes blinking.

"Aya, him blow velly hard," said the Serang, as he ran forward.

So they thought on the poop. And that's what Mackintosh said to Mrs. Dundas as he sailed into the hash and served it as Nelson served the French. The lady was still in a dressing-gown and in something of a taking besides, for she did not love hard weather.

"Are we going to have it worse, Mr. Mackintosh?" she asked.

"It ain't begun yet, ma'am," said old Mac, with his mouth full.

"Not begun!" cried Mrs. Dundas.

She was a magnificent creature, full bosomed and yet almost slim. Her eyes were a dark red-brown, her skin olive, with the red blood in it; her eyebrows were thick and regular and arched like the curved roach of a full topsail. Her lips were full and ruddy and petulant; there was a primitive fierceness about her; she was a civilized savage, full of passion and anger. The white men used to say that it was a strange thing that the quiet, downcast skipper had wedded her.

So might some fishing smack capture a pirate. She was dominating, domineering, haughty as the great seas. But she could grieve, could grow pale. Now she fumed.

"Not begun, indeed!"

She had only sailed once before in the *Flying Cloud*, and this was but the fourth year of her married life. But she believed she knew the seas.

"Why, no, ma'am," said old Mackintosh. "You ask the captain, ma'am."

"He'll never say," she cried. "All he says is, 'It's all right.' But I've my boy with me now, Mr. Mackintosh."

That made a difference. She softened and looked almost divine, a fierce mother conquered by her love for the child.

"Bless my heart, it is all right, ma'am," said Mackintosh; "it's only a bit of a breeze such as one expects hereabouts at this time of the year. If it breezes up heavier the captain will heave her to this night, and she'll ride it out like a duck in a pond."

He was calm enough and might have been in dock.

"You sailors are all alike. You don't want to frighten us. I think this is more than any we had last voyage."

The mate nodded.

"It might be, ma'am, and nothing much at

that. We had a record smooth-water trip, on my soul. Even off the Cape — "

"Why, 'twas terrible off the Cape," said she, half-angrily.

Old Mac smiled.

"Oh, ma'am, you don't know the Cape. A child could have pretty nigh sailed a toy boat around it last time. Maybe you'll see it this time. It's gay at times. 'Tis no joke, I tell you. 'Tis then I dread the captain. He hangs on to the royals till you'd think he loved 'em. It goes to his heart to furl a rag, let it blow like hell, beggin' your pardon, ma'am. Oh, yes, the Cape's something, when it turns itself loose. I've seen good men a bit whitish off the Cape."

He emptied his coffee-cup.

"Quite good men and quite a bit whitish," he added, murmuring and chewing on an old reminiscence. "But the captain's calmest when it's at its worst. I've known him sleep like a child at times when I stayed awake in my watch below and never so much as closed an eyelid."

She looked down at her big, fine hands. They were beautifully shaped, and her nails were polished like pearls.

"Oh, yes," she said.

"Now I must turn in and get a snooze, ma'am," said Mac. "There's some queer characters among the second-class passengers, ma'am. One or two rare devils, I think. They'll interest you."

"What are they like?" asked the captain's wife. "Who is there in the 'tween-decks?"

Mac replied as he rose:

"There's one rare handsome-looking devil of a chap," he said. "He's been to sea some, and now he's sick. Oh, a very rare rowdy sort, I'm betting. And there's a niceish sort of boy. He's standing out on the deck now, takin' it all in. 'Oh, this is fine, ain't it?' says he to me. He's very green, but I liked him. They're the only ones I've seen."

He went to his berth and turned in and slept like a full sail. It's a poor seaman who can't lay all his cares aside the moment he takes his sea-boots off. He should hang up his woes with his oilskins.

"The way they sleep!" said Jane Dundas. "I wish I could sleep in weather like this. And William —"

It was notorious that he could sleep. As old Mac said, he could sleep like a child, or perhaps a pig, when it blew great guns and marlinspikes and there was little to choose between hell and the face of the waters. Every one said he was such a quiet man. Why, he went about half-asleep all the time!

"If it weren't for my boy, I wish I'd never married," said she. She rose and went out of the saloon into the alleyway and to the door. The steward was at work in his pantry.

"Open the door for me, Said," she cried, and the dark-skinned steward opened it. The gale swept in like a flood and seemed to drown her. She gasped a little, and taking hold of the jamb of the door she drew herself up and looked out. She saw the shining wet decks on a big slope and caught sight of the surges to windward. Some of the crew dodged along for'ard of the deck-house. Close to her under the poop ladders stood a young man. He turned and saw her. She half-smiled, but there was fear upon her face and she fell back.

"Oh, shut the door," she cried. She went to her own cabin and found her boy asleep, and knelt down beside him.

"Why did I come to sea?" she asked. "And why did I bring my baby?"

She wanted the land and the warm home, a strong house. The boy should never be a sailor — never! She held him gently and cried over him, and her strong face was like a Madonna's, divine and maternal and a shelter from the winds.

But on deck young Ellison wondered.

"That's a strange-looking woman, very strange," he said. "But she's beautiful."

She disturbed his happy mind, which had no woman in it then and was cool and joyous. He might say that he liked one girl better than another, but now on sea and on deck all that he remembered were as one, and that one but a dream. It is very good to have no woman in one's

mind, for that is freedom. Love is slavery; in the heights the heart loves nothing, it has become free. He who remembers the days of his strength in which all who lived were equal to him, knows it. Yet this woman was but a shadow to him; he returned to the realities, to the ship — his world — for the ship is a world and separate as the earth itself.

He lived divinely in the fierce wet air and sucked at the very breasts of the gale. This was achievement in itself — it was something gained, something desirable, a real end, not a means. He breathed delightfully, even though he gasped; his blood ran like the seas. He said "Oh!" and "Ah!" and rubbed his hands.

Hour by hour the wind increased. As the ship fought her way to windward, there were times when it seemed that she butted against a wall. She stopped, quivered, and broke away furiously. Till now she had gone easy, being sea-kindly and weatherly. But at last, as the day began to gather in the west, husbanding its strength there, she was tormented. She had been towed well to windward, and far, and now was on the north edge of the Bay. As the wind veered, blowing in furious gusts as it veered, she had come up. Now the wind was west-southwest, and her head was pointing west of south, for she lay as close as a yacht. Ushant was a hundred leagues to the southeast. But she still clawed off the land; she

endured and fought it out like a live thing, and made less leeway than a thousand ships.

"Go it, old girl," said the mate. He was a little drunk with the wind, elevated by it as good seamen get. It stimulated him, making him equal to its demands. Jack, at eight bells that afternoon, when the second mate went on the poop, heard them talking above his head. It was the first dog-watch, and Mac was in no hurry to go below. The boy caught words now and then.

"It begins —"

That was old Mac.

"Oh, aye, sir," said the second mate, roaring.

"To-night — heave to —"

"When the wind shifts, sir, eh?"

It was best to have the wind north of west before they hove to, if it might be. It gave sea room. After all, Ushant was near. One drifts to loo'ard fast when hove to. Then old Mac came down on the main-deck. He stood alongside Jack, who made room respectfully. But he wanted to know things and here was the man who knew.

"Is this a very bad gale, sir?" he asked.

"Oh, no; not at all," replied old Mac, who indeed loved to talk with any one, and was said by the apprentices to talk to the mizzenmast in the middle watch. "It's a nice breeze, my lad."

"Oh, sir," said the boy, and Mac eyed him.

"You think —"

"I think it might make chimney-pots fly ashore, sir," laughed Jack.

The mate rubbed his hands.

"Well, it might — oh, yes, it's lively, a bit of a blow, you know. But she stands it nicely, my boy."

"She's splendid," said Jack.

"You've never been in a ship before, eh?"

"This is the first time, sir."

"And you ain't been sick?"

Jack was scornful.

"No, but most of the rest are. I like it. I think it's splendid. If you hadn't said it wasn't a gale, though, I should have thought it was," he said, simply.

"Bless me — oh, yes, it's a gale all right. But there are gales and gales. We've not got the cream of this yet."

Jack brightened.

"Then you think it will be worse?"

"Maybe, maybe," said the mate. "You never can tell in these latitudes and in the Bay. Oh, yes, it's a tidy breeze; I should call it a very tidy breeze, my lad."

"When it gets very bad, I suppose the captain comes on deck, sir?" said Jack.

The mate looked at him and at the sea and then aloft.

"Very likely, my lad, very likely," said the mate. He seemed thoughtful. "But don't you

get prowling about too much, or maybe you'll get washed overboard."

Every now and again she shipped a heavy sea for'ard of the mainmast. Some of them were green if one caught the light in them. The sound of them as they slammed down on the deck and washed against the house was fine, thought Jack. These sounds and sights drew him like magnets.

"Have you ever seen any one washed overboard, sir?" asked the boy.

"Don't want to see it again, not in weather like this," said the mate. "Have I seen it? Good God, I've seen more than I want to see, my lad!"

He went in hastily and slammed the saloon door. Jack stared after him.

"He's seen men drowned. That must be awful," said the Greenhorn. In his mind he saw men drown and heard them cry out, heard them scream fine and thin against the awful winds like the crying of a sea-bird.

He went below.

Oh, yes, it was, and without any doubt, a very tidy breeze. As the night fell on the troublous livid waste of waters the good ship pounded at it hard, and tried her plates and her rigging and her canvas to the uttermost. At two bells in the first watch, when all down in the steerage and the second cabin were preparing to turn into their miserable quarters and put in a swearing or prayerful night, the wind suddenly increased.

Then she shipped a very heavy sea, and there was a tremendous sound on deck like the beating of a great metal drum. The women cried out, and those who were Catholics crossed themselves.

"We're going down," they cried. "We're sinking!"

And Bramwell Gray came out of the second cabin and swore at them horribly, so that they forgot what they believed, and cried out against him for shame.

"You lot of damn green bog-trotters, dry up," said Bram, contemptuously.

And still the thunder of the drumming continued, and there were strange cries on deck, and the hurried patter of bare feet.

"I'm for the deck," said Bram. He jumped for the ladder, and Jack Ellison followed him. As they got out on deck a big thing swept past them. They both scrambled for the poop. The four-hundred-gallon tank, fortunately an empty one, that had been lashed to ring-bolts for'ard of booby-hatch, had broken adrift, and taken charge. But even empty it weighed six hundredweight.

"Here's something to do," said Bram.

## CHAPTER. VIII

### THE TANK

It was dark as a pot of pitch to one who came on deck from a lighted cabin. What the thing was that had missed him by a hair's-breadth the Greenhorn didn't know. All he did know was that a big drum of a sort boomed before his very nose and slammed itself against the starboard rail long before he grabbed the port poop ladder and skipped up it as if a dog or devil were at his heels.

"Ho! ho! something to do!" bellowed Bram, excitedly. When he was excited he danced in a most amazing fashion, first on one foot, then on the other, with bent knees. It was a kind of jig, a hornpipe, a measure in process of becoming something.

The mate and second mate were both on deck, the chief in his pajamas. He had been fast asleep when the tank broke away and after a few preliminary lunges came for the front of the poop and hammered him out of his first sleep. There is a fine din about an empty tank, and as the *Flying Cloud* rolled, it sounded like a war-drum,

like some huge mad Turkish ship in which they use drums instead of bells or horns in a fog.

The main-deck was something like an arena with a mad bull loose, and the crew, like a lot of useless picadors, were scared and running. The old Serang's voice was like his pipe, shrill as a whistle, but though he told them what to do, he wasn't keen on doing it himself. He skipped upon the rail and held to the main-swifter, and raged against the rest who imitated him. The mate made a rush for the main-deck, and it appeared as if the tank saw him. It came for him at once, and Mac leaped back again just in time. The poop ladder was splintered. Then a sea came over for'ard of the poop, between it and the main-rigging, or nearly abreast of it. It was a green sea, and the tank began to swim. It fled aft and then for'ard, half-way past the deck-house. Then it turned, and as the ship climbed an opposing sea, it slid aft again, and battered thunder against the booby-hatch.

"Ho! ho! something to do!" danced Bram. He skipped from the poop, over the brass rail, and presently laid hold of the main-rigging. He got hold of the coil of the topsail-halliards as they were coiled on the pin. Jack saw him and went after him as quick as a flash, eager to help, and yet not knowing how the thing was to be done. The second mate got down on the main-deck, too. The mate roared from the break of the poop, and

on the starboard side the old Serang fumbled with another coil. Then once more she shipped a sea, and in the fume of it the tank danced like a cork. She made a heavy lee roll and the tank half-climbed the rail. Only another foot and it might have gone overboard, to everybody's relief. But one little Kling yelled horribly. As he hung on it seemed as if the tank was climbing for him.

"Now, now," yelled the mate. The Serang in desperation got on deck and slipped round the tank with his rope. The tank walked over it, and when the weather roll came walked up to windward.

"Oh, damn!" said the second mate.

"Catch her now," yelled Bram. He did as the Serang had done, and got further. He even caught a turn on the pin. But the rope was too low down. The tank turned over and slid to loo'ard again quite steadily and calmly. There seemed no earthly reason why it shouldn't now be caught, but when Budd, greatly daring, laid hold of it, it slid two feet sideways, slung him under the poop ladders, and with a rumble and mighty drumming went for'ard again and leaped upon the main-hatch. Bram roared with laughter. It was strange to hear him and it made some feel angry. The Greenhorn felt quite savage with him. This was a serious matter, or so it seemed to him. It was made more serious in a moment,

for the tank walked off the hatch, turned a somersault, and by some manoeuvres of incredible subtlety and swiftness caught a Malay's foot and partly skinned it. The Malay yelled blue murder, and appealed to Allah to curse and confound the tank. The Greenhorn, who had always been a great reader, thought of Victor Hugo and the absurd and wonderful scene of the loose gun.

"It's rather like that," said the Greenhorn, in the back of his mind. Assuredly it was not very serious; it was humourous, though none but the queer devil that Bram was could see it. The only really serious point was that the tank refused to allow any one on the main-deck. It seemed very much alive: no angry cow in a stock-yard, no mad steer in a corral, ever seemed more alive, more vicious, more alert. It was quite impossible to be a minute or even a few swift seconds on that deck before the tank roared, so to speak, and came in a charge like a bull with his head down. And all the time the sea increased, and the wind with it. It had been loose for some ten minutes, had already hurt one man and knocked the breath out of another. Budd felt as if he had been walked over by a crowd. He showed amazing bruises later.

"I wish I knew what to do," said the eager Greenhorn. He slipped down on deck, and the tank promptly waltzed up to him, pounding the

deck as it came. He fled for the rail. It was past a joke, but he laughed all the same.

Then old Mac came down on deck and exhausted all his Lascari talk in abuse of the crew and the jabbering Serang. The tank stayed to listen. It stopped quite still. It looked the most harmless, quiet, well-conducted piece of hardware that ever held water. It seemed to ask humbly what all the trouble was. Then there came a squall that laid the ship over. The sea bubbled in through the scuppers. The tank made a bolt for the rail again and brayed out thunder that was heard above the roar of the sea and the wind. The mate rushed for it and slipped. He went down into the lee scuppers. The tank pushed him aside savagely, and went up to windward. The Serang followed it and it turned on him. It chased him with swiftness and deliberation. It followed him as he slipped it. It was wicked and quick, and then just as he gave it up with a yell, it turned away quietly, slid up to the weather rail just under Bram, and asked, fairly asked, to be tied up. Bram dropped a bight of the halliards over it, and it was then a question as to what all the trouble was about.

"Thanks, young fellow," said the mate, "You did that all right."

"It's not the first I've helped to catch," said Bram. He helped them lash it again. The Khalasis were very eager now; they were the

sort that will kick a fighter when he's down, as one will see by and by. They were monstrously brave, but the Serang cuffed them all the same. After all, he might not be what he should be, but he was the best of the lot, and had run some risks. The only one seriously hurt was a real malingerer, as it happened, and he howled as if his foot had been taken off. But it comforted him greatly to think that he would be able to lie up now for a long time. With a little management he might keep his foot raw for a month or two.

"I say," said the Greenhorn, "that was very fine, wasn't it? Awfully exciting, you know, eh?"

He opened the booby-hatch to go down below, and just as he got inside, going backwards, and found the ladder with his feet, a heavy sea came on board. It hurled Bram into the lee scuppers, and as he went he shut the door on Jack's fingers. As the Greenhorn yelled with pain the ladder broke from its fastenings and left him suspended by his left hand. Then he dropped and fell upon an Irishman and some bundles of women's gear. The women screamed, for the sea poured in on top of him, and came down in a cataract. Jack got up and swore all the swearing he knew, while he wrung his hand with the intense pain of a smashed nail. He blasphemed very well for a youngster. He was surprised and much pleased to find he had such a flow of bad language, because he knew it was difficult to be a sailor if one

didn't swear, and he felt that there was only one career in this strange, full world worth following. In the course of the day he had had more sensations than a month or a year of a mouldy city gave him.

"Oh, you dreadful, dreadful young man," said one woman; "you'll sink the ship; you'll sink the ship!"

Bram put his white face into the booby-hatch, and took up Jack's tale with far worse language.

"You shut up, and some of you fix up that ladder again," said Bram. "There's nothing wrong, but a little iron tank been loose. Now then, Pat, up with the ladder."

He came down soaking. When he and Jack were in dry clothes they sat together in the second cabin.

"I ain't goin' to turn in yet," said Bram. "The mate let on to me that they'd likely heave her to presently. It's a tidy scorcher of a breeze this."

As the rest of them subsided into silence and snored and groaned, the amazing sounds of the ship and the seas and the wind became wonderfully obvious.

"I'm not keen to go to bed — to turn in, I mean," said Jack. "I'll sit up with you."

Bram instructed him in the ways of the sea, and taught him how to make a bowline, and lectured with awful illustrations on the debauchery of big towns.

“ I’m glad I caught that old tank though,” he said every now and again. He was ambitious of prominence in all the worlds in which he found himself.

## CHAPTER IX

### HOVE TO

THEY might talk, and Bram, indeed, talked marvellously, having a tongue as long as the fore-top bowline, as they used to say; but the passions and excitements of the day told on the younger of the two, and he fell asleep even while Bram spun his amazing cuffers. As to heaving to the *Flying Cloud*, why, that was a thing not yet; for though the gale grew very strong, she was a ship that could eat into it when most would have been drifting. She was helped a little to windward by the out-draught of the Bay at its northern verge; but even without it and her luck on the ebb from the two channels, she clawed to windward beautifully. There's nothing on earth quite so fine as a ship under close-reefed topsails going close-hauled in a heavy sea, unless it is when she runs free, or is under full sail in a fine working breeze. Indeed, one may declare she is beautifullest all ways, and of no other thing on earth can one make so great, so absurd, so true a boast.

Once more Mac and Budd had their five minutes' colloquing at midnight. This time Mac relieved the second mate, of course.

"A bit heavy," groaned Mac, sleepily.

"I never saw anything so slow to come to its worst, sir," said Budd.

"It'll be a scorcher then, and no fatal error," said old Mac. "The wind hasn't shifted more than a point since I left her. And that blasted dancin' devilish dervish of a tank spoiled half my watch below. I'm all bruises and stiff as a biscuit."

He rubbed himself and grunted.

"The same here," said Budd, who was really much the worst.

"However, it didn't do as much harm as it might. The young fellow who helped seemed lively, eh?"

"Aye, he was, sir," said Budd.

"A rare scorcher, you mark me," said Mac.

They were under the weather-cloth in the mizzen-rigging.

"We'll heave her to when you come on deck again," said Mac, "that's what the captain says."

"Very well, sir," said the second mate. He went down below.

"I wonder if the 'old man' would turn out if she blew the sticks out of her," he pondered, as he pulled off his outer garments and subsided. "I never saw such a beggar for sleep."

His head touched the pillow and his mouth opened, and then he snored. It's a great gift to be able to do that, to draw sleep out of a pillow

and to sound a horn of triumph over the woes of waking life.

And old Mac limped and swore and smoked and wished for a sign of dawn, and prayed to the gods of seamen and the little gods who look after manilla and coir and europe rope, that nothing should give way at night, however the Bay howled and whatever the devils of the sea tried to do. If Ajax prayed to be destroyed in the light, so seamen hope for their disasters to come, if come they must, in the time of the sun.

A watch is but four hours. What's four hours to a man who owns ships? Lord help us! it's a mere nothing to him — time for dinner and a game of billiards and a whiskey and soda and a cigar. But for those who walk his decks there's more than fourteen thousand seconds in the watch, and in a second gear can go and a vessel may be dismasted. As men stand by in the dark and watch they know this. Something in the way of wire or bolt may part and the whole world is about their ears, be they never so wise and never so good. There are times in the trades and in the passage winds when a long watch may be but a short dream even to a good seaman. But in the wild latitudes of the North Atlantic there's no minute for dreaming in peace. One may have confidence in the hands who built her; in those who wrought her plates and shaped her spars, even confidence in the care of Chips the carpenter,

and the knowing wise bo'sun, but even then there are flaws. One has seen a chain tack stand a howler and hold uncounted tons and then part next day in the calm. That's luck, for if it had parted when it held the reefed foresail, there would have been the devil to pay, and, no pitch hot. "Help us when we pray for those in peril on the sea!" But it's a splendid peril, and it has its very great hours.

"A laster, and no fatal error," said old Mac, crossly. As he ached with bruises it was no splendid hour for him. But he couldn't help thinking of the boy who had said, "This is fine, sir." A good lad, a good lad in sooth. Mac rubbed up his old impressions, and remembered his own first hard blow in the North Sea, when his leary, clever, brutal old skipper lay out a gale with a hundred fathoms of anchorless chain disturbing the bottom of the sea and acting as a drogue, keeping the rotten old brig head to wind and sea.

"Lord, I was miserable," said Mac. "But it was fine; on my oath, it was fine. Poor little kid that I was!"

A gush of pity came over him for that poor little kid. The poor little kid might have been there still, the way the old chap felt for him.

"I cried for my mother, I know I did," said Mac. "The poor old girl hated the sea. They say there's none in heaven though. I wonder if

there's any heaven. Hell is goin' to sea and bein' pretty old. That blasted tank!"

He walked to the binnacle, and spoke to the Malay quartermaster in Lascari.

"Is she steering easy, Lalu?"

"Not hard, Bara Sahib," replied Lalu.

She had come up a little more. On a wind, whatever its force, she steered like a yacht. Indeed, she might have been left to herself with a spoke of weather helm, when under close-reefed topsails in proper trim. Now she was an inch or so too much by the head, and carried too much weather helm, as Mac knew.

"She have to lie to under her fore-topmast-staysail again," said old Mac, grunting. It didn't seem the right thing, but there it was; she wouldn't lie to under her main-topsail. And that seems the only right thing for a big ship, doesn't it? It looks right, and when the close-reefed topsail is goose-winged there's something very taking about it. It looks like management, and it's fine to handle a ship and coax her and make her handy, and make her show she's a duck and as sea-kindly as an albatross when he's in the water and riding head to wind, perhaps asleep. It's no wonder a ship is a She. One man will do anything with one of them, and the next finds her as stubborn as the devil with a usurer's soul. There are pilots, and not a few of them, who will come on board a heart-breaker, and say, "Well, I don't

see what's wrong with her," and the skipper and the mates are aghast to note how she works under the stranger.

The longest watch has its end, and it comes though the wind is the worst that ever blew. By the time it was seven bells in the middle watch old Mac owned it wasn't a "breeze" any longer. It was a real, fine, solid, lasting, growing, authentic North Atlantic gale, with squalls every ten minutes or so that made things crack. "Hold on good tackling," said Mac, more good-humouredly as his time drew on. "Let young Budd have a turn."

But at a quarter to four he sent one of the apprentices (of whom nothing has been said so far) to call the skipper.

"I wonder if he'll come," said Mac. "Damn me if I ever was with such a man! What's wrong with him? Lord! I could understand if he drank, if he laid his soul in soak as so many do from start to finish, but to be as slack as he is without liquor, 'tis a fair puzzler!"

Yet this time, at any rate, the "old man" came on deck, and stood staring up to windward as if he were dazed. Then the old nature of a seaman showed itself; he looked aloft at the topsails. The mate went up to him.

"Good morning, sir; I thought it best to call you," he said, respectfully.

"Aye, aye," mumbled the skipper, once more

with his chin on his breast; "it blows hard, Mr. Mackintosh."

"It does, sir!" said Mac, rubbing his hands. "And as you said last night, we might do no harm to heave her to."

The skipper nodded.

"It'll be worse before it's better," said he.

Indeed, she was making no headway to speak of. The sea had risen prodigiously, and ran so heavy that nothing but a full-powered steamship could have made anything of it. There was that aspect in the tumult of the sea which alarms; it was what seamen call with peculiar truth a "living gale." It seems at such times that the wind desires the death of all things else. It is so monstrous, egotistic, all-devouring, and the sea takes on a wan aspect of alarm; it shows forlornly, wasted, white.

"Call all hands at eight bells and get the top-sails off her," said the skipper. He nodded again and went away with his head down and stood in the lee of the weather-cloth in the mizzen-rigging. He stood apart, silent, oppressed. The mate glanced at him and half-opened his mouth to speak. But he said nothing. He called Clipperton, the apprentice, and told him to rouse the second mate.

"Then rouse out the Serang and tell him to pipe all hands."

The Serang's pipe was heard shrilly through the

roar of the wind just as Budd came on deck, tying on his sou'wester and looking sleepy as a full sail. But the sting of the spray woke him. The men turned out of the foc'sle slowly and came aft. The apprentices (there were two of them in each mate's watch) came out of the after part of the deck-house, where they were berthed.

"Clew up the mizzen-topsail," said the skipper, coming to the break of the poop. The mate translated and the Serang squealed the order in his high falsetto. Mac himself slacked away the weather-sheet.

The sound of the trampling men and the squeal of the pipe and the high shrill voice of the old Serang woke Jack Ellison with a start. He found he had fallen asleep and slept for hours with his head on the table of the second cabin. Bram had left him and turned in. Jack saw him in the dim light of the swinging lamp, for there were no doors to the berths. The seas raced past the port-hole. There was only a dim gleam of light there, for the dawn was only just breaking. Jack yawned and groaned and felt chill and stiff. He shook his head, made a face, and rose. Then he heard the trampling of the men again and the sound of bellowed orders and the melancholy wail of the crew as they called out and hauled on the gear. They were doing something! Aya, Allah! God send us safe to sunny seas!

He crawled out from his corner, and with the live

uneasy ship beneath his uncertain, unpractised feet he crawled on deck and woke.

It was still dark, or so it seemed to one who had but now left a lamp. The scud flew low; the clouds above, that were the mothers of the scud, were dark. It was as if the ship flew in some dim cavern. Strange little creatures on the poop yelled and moaned and groaned. Now he got his eyesight, and, hanging upon a pin just where the main-topsail-halliards were coiled, he stared at the mizzen-topsail in its gear. The weather clew was chock up, the leach-lines and bunt-lines as tight as they would go. Then the mate slacked away the lee clew. They hauled the lee gear chock up.

"*Upar jao*," said the mate. The men went aloft, but first of all were Budd and the apprentices. Jack watched them, watched the first topsail taken in that he had ever seen.

"I'd — I'd like to be up there," said Jack. This kind of thing was real; it appealed, it drew and held him. All other things disappeared out of his mind; he was filled with the very idea of a topsail and its conquering. What were Greek and Latin and conic sections and chemical problems or formulæ to this heroic deed?

The poor little black-skinned children of the sea (of whom few were heroes, be it said) hung and clung and spread out along the yard, hanging on to the jackstay. The second mate was at the

bunt, big Clipperton, one of the apprentices, with him. The others were already at the yard-arm. You shall note, you who know not the sea, that the hard work of furling is at the bunt, while in reefing the toil and responsibility are at the yard-arms, at the earings. Ho! but they toiled and grabbed at the bellying canvas, got it in and lost it again a score of times, till Budd used awful language, translated into horrid Lascari by the Serang, and made them hold on, putting the fear of God into them, as one says. And Jack below acted with them, felt his hands open and shut and grasp the loose canvas. Oh, why was he down there doing nothing? He saw the great folds of canvas yield, saw the curved divided belly of it, where the bunt-lines and leach-lines held it, give in and go upon the yard, and then saw the little men make it fast with the gaskets. His heart was in his mouth for them. But it was fine! Oh, how splendid! a great reality in a dream! And the wind was like an organ; he heard the very devil play a voluntary on it. And yet — no, this was the beginning!

As they had tackled the mizzen-topsail, so they handed the fore-topsail, and as they stowed it with great care and pains, the fore-topmast-staysail, most stout canvas, was hoisted up. Then came the main-topsail, that cost an hour's hard labour; a year it might be, or so it seemed, and then when they came down there was the

ship hove to all of herself, with a broad wake on the starboard bow as she sagged off to loo'ard. And no sooner was she thus than the pipe of the wind, as if it had heard the Serang's pipe of "all hands," screamed splendidly, and, as it were, brought "all hands" to the heavens' bellows. The day was all abroad now, a day of gray-green wash and foam, and the sound of it was a great song, an orchestral accompaniment to this work of man, a daring ship on the seas. The decks shone; there was a look of utter and divine cleanliness about all things, even on the foam-washed faces of the crew. The seas which had been aggressive when the ship hung upon the wind, now seemed less ferocious for a time; they hardly attained their mark; they fell down before they reached the rail; they never climbed it. But even though there was a moment's peace, the gale itself was bigger, more pervasive, more insistent, and spoke of a heavier sea by and by. For now it shifted straight into the west, and in a little while the glass would rise. Then, then, the fiercest of it was to come, for as they say at sea, "First rise after low foretells a stronger blow." "Lord love us and shine upon us!" said Budd, with a happy smile, as he stood in his berth for a moment, and wiped his pink skin with a dirty towel and filled his pipe. He had no idea of what he meant by that. All he meant was that he was happy, and that the old hooker was hove

to, and that he had an hour or two to loaf in and think of his girl, maybe, though it was his watch on deck.

On my soul, I think every one was happy but the skipper and his handsome wife. And very soon the "old man" lay down and took a snooze. He was hove to, so to speak.

After this Jack went below, and got something which stood for breakfast — ship's biscuit, cart-grease, and water bewitched — and told Bram all that had happened.

"I say, it was great, that!" said Jack, happily. He had sucked in, by seeing, some of the joy of acting. He looked happy, and perhaps looked less a boy.

"It blows a snorter," said Bram, with a sigh. Perhaps he remembered when he was less a sick man and had worked up aloft. "Was the 'old man' on deck?"

"The captain? Oh, yes," said Jack. "He's a rummy sort of chap, very quiet, eh?"

"Like as not he'll break out drinkin' presently," yawned Bram. "Here, you chaps, let's play Nap. It's no fun on deck in weather like this.

And Jack stared. Good heavens, no fun! Well, perhaps Bram was right. It was no fun, but a wonderful and magnificent drama, as if the earth itself was adrift, sailing in a storm of stars, in a wind out of the depths of the universe. Let her drift hove to, from Vega to  $\alpha$  Centauri, or some-

where in Hercules, or wherever it is she's bound for!

"Oh, Lord," said Jack, "no fun!"

It was very strange to him. Here was this great handsome, experienced devil and debauchee preferring Nap to a gale in the Bay! Heavens! he must be tired and overcome in life. Such tiredness, such wonderful don't-care-a-damnative-ness was by itself most magnificent.

The pawnbroker and the cotton broker and "Mr." Walker played Nap. And outside their little game the wind orchestra tuned up and, while the gale in the fore-topmast-staysail boomed like a bassoon, the devil himself fiddled and harped on the thousand strings of that wonderful ship.

"I go Nap," said pallid Bram.

"And I'll go on on deck," said Jack. He found Mr. Mackintosh under the break of the poop smoking a pipe.

## CHAPTER X

### MR. MACKINTOSH

THE mate was a man concealed in oilskins and sea-boots, a long yellow shining coat as wet as the sea, and boots dull with grease. He wore his sou'wester deep on his head and tied under his chin. His face showed hardly more than shrewd eyes and a nose and some hair, a short stubbly moustache. Under the lifted collar of his coat was his patchy gray beard. He puffed placidly at his pipe and smiled and spat when Jack came alongside.

"Are we hove to now, sir?" asked the boy.

"Why, yes, yes, to be sure," puffed the mate. His ideas on being hove to were ancient, but he saw the eagerness of the boy.

"She don't lie to comfortable under a taups'l, you see," he said, half-apologetically.

"No?"

"With a fo'taupm'st-stay'sl on her she's a duck though," he added. "D'ye like the sea, sonny?"

"It's very wonderful, sir," said Jack.

The mate spat again.

"Aye, I suppose it is, young fellow. It kind of draws one, don't it?"

He remembered when it drew him. He smelt whale-oil at Dundee.

"I wish I'd gone to sea when I was young," said the youth.

"Aye, when you were young," said the mate. "I went when I was young. I went when I was eleven, lad. I've been at it since, ever since."

The years went past like the wind itself; they boomed in his ears and were not.

"I shipped in Dundee. You don't know Dundee, likely?"

"No," said Jack, "but I know London a little."

"It's a great place, London," said the mate. "What made you come out this way?"

Jack told him.

"Quarrelled with your uncle, eh? I quarrelled with my father, lad. Most seamen quarrel with their fathers and get hell from some as ain't their fathers. But then you're a gentleman, ain't you?"

Jack blushed; it was a hard question.

"I — I hope so, sir," said Jack. But it was no question of hoping with old Mac.

"Is your uncle rich?"

"Not very."

"Well, I dare say he don't work for a living," said the mate.

And Jack had to consider what all this meant.

"It isn't beer and skittles goin' to sea," said the mate. "If you went, you'd know."

"I think I should like hard work, sir," said Jack.

"Oh, hard work —" said the mate, looking to windward.

He added thoughtfully:

"I've done a deal of it myself, but it isn't that I object to."

He knocked his pipe out.

"Here, you stick to bein' a gentleman, my boy, and when you get out to Australia you go back again to your uncle and say you've had enough of it. Mark me, goin' to sea and the like isn't worth it. I *know* it isn't. Look at me! over fifty and a mate, eh?"

"Yes," said Jack.

The mate looked at the weather quarter.

"There's more wind where this comes from," he said. And then he added:

"I don't often talk to steerage passengers, but you're rather different, ain't you now?"

"They're a rough lot, I suppose," said Jack.

"Pigs I call 'em," said the mate. He turned to go and then said:

"Don't fool about the decks too much, youngster." As he opened the door into the starboard alleyway, he turned back again, spat on the deck once more, and said:

"I call 'em pigs."

When a vessel is hove to with a fair amount of sea-room and the world is a windy wilderness, there's little to do provided she is not shaking

shear-poles and seizings and such gear off her. The crew were all for'ard save one quartermaster tending her with the helm. The second mate was on the poop with nothing to do but smoke. It's always "more rain, more rest," unless there's need. The Lord of Winds and Waters alone knew whether there would be any. He, perhaps, is what sailors call "Holy Sailor" in their milder adjurations. But perhaps there's no God at sea save in fine weather. In the Bay, with a Bay Particular blowing, who can face it but Davy Jones, the maritime sea-devil, who looks for the souls of drowned sailormen?

"It's wonderful," said the Greenhorn. He sucked at the salt spray on his ruddy lips and sucked in the salt knowledge of the wind and the sea, and stayed there for hours. The young apprentices, Clipperton, Rufford, Smith, and Macaulay, saw him when they opened the door of their den in the deck-house and smelt fresh air. They were all as ignorant as might be, for who teaches brass-bound poop ornaments more than they hanker to learn? Yet the Greenhorn regarded them with some reverence: they were apprentices in the greatest trade of all and might one day be mates and skippers. They were a foul-mouthed set of indecent young ruffians, all out of smooth-spoken, decent middle-class families. They were learning things, of course, but some couldn't tell a bumpkin from a bung-starter.

"They know nothin' and want to know nothin'," said the knowledgeable mate. But then, he had been a foremast hand, boy and man, and no skipper had been careful of his precious hide.

On the whole they were good boys. What does a little horridness matter in youths? One sees the best come out of such beastliness after all, and the devil himself out of a church, it may be. They weren't so bad, though of course mighty proud of the little they did know, when they caught Jack's eye and presently invited him into their den. They tried him with old sea wheezes, such as the Key of the Kelson, but found he had read Marryat to some purpose. After all, he wasn't as green as all that, though Clipperton got him neatly.

"The skipper and the mates are no seamen, I can tell you," said Clipperton. "They never put this old clipper about but they get her aback."

"You don't say so," said poor Jack, who, however, was surprised to hear that the mate was no seaman. The brass-bound ones roared, and Clipperton then explained.

"I don't know anything about the sea," said Jack. So they proceeded to tell him all about it. The sea consisted chiefly in getting drunk in Melbourne and more drunk in Calcutta. This was good to know, of course. There's something in it, after all.

Clipperton was a good-natured, slab-sided loafer, about six feet high, which is too tall for a seaman. He had been to sea three voyages and knew an earing from the watch-tackle. At least, Budd said he did, and the second mate ought to know. Rufford was a mere boy, who knew thrice as much as Clip, having eyes in his head, though he had only been one voyage. Smith and Macaulay were good solid young ruffians out of a grammar school, which taught them no manners and a Latin grammar in Latin. They knew lobsouse from soup and bully, and could go aloft and hang there as useless as a bat asleep in a barn. They taught Jack Ellison a great deal in an hour and a half. There's more learning to be got out of jackasses than wise men by mere observation. But he liked them all the same. They made him feel rather superior, for they all declared the rest knew nothing about the sea. As they obviously knew nothing else, Jack felt he could stand on his feet. The first big lesson to be learned on earth is to do that.

Jack had learned an amazing amount in forty-eight hours. It might be stated that he had learned some four hundred and eighty bawdy stories (most of which he happily forgot), and he had made the acquaintance of three or four men, including in those four the mates, Bramhall Gray, and the Serang. He had also become acquainted with dirt for the first time in his life, and had

eaten with some natives of the wildest sort from Connemara. It was like travelling in the wilderness. Then there were the young monkeys of the deck-house, the apprentices before mentioned, and the black devils of Lascars, all as strange as the wild sea itself. Why, if most men had half the chances to learn as much as Jack, they would know something. He was proud of himself, and would have turned up his nose at his late Latin professor, who was really an extraordinary ass, though he knew Latin well enough, because that selfsame professor didn't know what a Serang was, and couldn't turn the fore-topmast-staysail into the tongue of Cicero to save his life or his poor little reputation.

And Jack had a deal more to learn. That was what he felt to be so fine; he saw he had but to open his eyes and all the gods would fill him up with knowledge. Never was so curious a person as Jack in this world. He was gifted with the divinest power of stowing things away: big or little, down they went into his main-hold, and were as nicely handled as if he had a kind of Stevens on Mental Stowage to read in. But, bless the boy, he didn't even know he was so curious, so omniverous. He hardly knew he was conscious at all, which is the most blessed state to be in. Let the psychologists prate and discuss consciousness if they will. It's really a disease, and the best men don't have it. But thought is incurable.

Such a man as the captain had it badly, poor devil, as one will see by and by.

As it happened, Jack saw him pretty soon, for the "old man" (all skippers being "old men") came on deck at two bells in the afternoon watch and walked the weather side of the poop for an hour in solitary grandeur or wretchedness. Jack admired him. Was he not a captain, the skipper (Jack could have told you the Anglo-Saxon for it), the lord of all he surveyed? And though it blew hard enough to blow tar out of a tar-pot, he paid no more attention to the wind than if it had been a mere nought on the Beaufort scale. This was as it should be, said the Greenhorn. But of course Jack was certain that it never could or would blow any harder, and that if Mr. Mackintosh said it could or might he was only putting on side. However, the skipper certainly treated matters as easily as if he was in dock; he went with his head down on his breast, not caring a damn, so to speak.

"He must know a lot," said Jack, respectfully. He would have given his ears for some notice from the great man, who never so much as looked to windward, a very odd thing in a seaman, by the way, unless he's on a lee shore. Well, perhaps the skipper was on a lee shore. There's more than one sort.

It was jolly, said Jack, that no one came on deck who wasn't obliged. There was no work to

do, and though the Serang once came past him and said, "Ah, you Elzon," he saw no other of the crew but the cooks emptying slops in the lee scuppers. They looked wonderful in their thin white jackets and wide flapping trousers and their turbans, pictures from the tropics set in a wide waste of northern seas. Jack was very proud that he was the only one on deck. It made him feel manly, haughty, and courageous, even though he was as wet as a hen in a rain-storm on a heath. He felt monstrously healthy and alive through it all.

And then all of a sudden in one long squall the very worst of the gale came. Oh, but it was a picture that beat all the galleries of Italy and the world that owes the best of itself to Italy.

When a ship runs, or when she hangs close-hauled upon a gale, the ship itself is the Thing, is the Fighter or the one in Flight; but here, when she was hove to and merely endured with her head under her wing like a sleeping petrel, the sea itself was all or most. Now the sky was very low and dark, with one whitish, half-hopeful, half-threatening glare in the northwest, and the torn white seas, gloomy and green in patches, with here and there spaces of thunderous blue, leaped and fled like wretched beasts before the hunters. Against the wonderful background the masts showed clear-cut with their pointed yards: the gear in tense bowed curves. The ship rose upon

the swell, and, lying over, fell away and again came up, and then once more the staysail took her off again. It hung there like a white balloon, but was strong and silent. Yet all other things shrieked and screamed, from the powerful shrouds and backstays to the thinnest piece of running gear belonging to the main-skysail. The chorus was most musical, but to the unaccustomed ear appalling, and with a vast quality of emotion in it. This was the song of the great opposed wind. But not only was its song the song it sang about the ship, but out of the very hollows of the sea came booming notes, and from each crest a scream, and out of the gray water of the distances an organic chant of the tortured sea, not unlike (and yet how unlike!) the chant of mountains when the wind leaps from crag to crag. The ship itself was but the gigantic harp in the hands of the great harper, but he controlled the crying voices of the spirits of the sea, robed in dreadful white, in samite, and in green and blue.

And then there came a moment when the eye of man saw nothing, for the level spray came leaping from the crests of the waters and blinded human eyes as if with shot. White seas, not green, came clamorous to the ship's side and climbed it. The very weather scuppers shot up white geysers of spume that ran bubbling down to leeward. One big sea deluged the foc'sle head and washed in a great cataract down upon the

main-deck. In the lift of her bow afterwards the ship seemed like a great sea beast, some huge creature of ancient days, that lifted her snout to breathe again. And yet once more a sea smote her, and in the white smother of it she laboured and rolled and things aloft cracked and her huge bulk of iron groaned. Then suddenly the wind flew a point towards the northwest, and out of the gray indistinguishable waste of sea and sky there broke a gleam of blue.

The second mate saw it, wiped his face with a wet rag, and, pointing, said to the skipper:

"We'll be making sail before dark at this rate, sir."

"Yes," said the skipper, lifting his head from his breast, "to be sure, Mr. Budd, to be sure."

He came for'ard, stood at the break of the poop for a minute, and then went below.

From that hour the wind fell amazingly and the sea rose. At sundown the mate and the second mate made sail. Mrs. Dundas said the captain was unwell and had turned in to get a little sleep.

"A beggar for sleep," said old Mac, "a strange beggar for sleep."

## CHAPTER XI

### FINE WEATHER

THE little world of the *Flying Cloud* — for, indeed, it was a world and one far apart, far apart from all others in the strange wash of the sea — had done with great winds and the amazing energy of the North Atlantic when she left the Bay behind her and sailed south in heavenly skies. The biting gale of the Bay became no more than a pleasant breeze ere she had made a day's run, and this in no seaman's phrase, but in a mere landsman's merest honesty. She hung out aloft her flying clouds of canvas, white as snow with the bleaching of the tempest and the sun, and carried even that last kite of all, the skysail at the main. She went most handsomely, a fair white pyramid with everything set and drawing lightly, courses and topsails, t'gall'ns'ls and royals and staysails, and drew forth into the great paths of ocean. For days that added themselves to days and became weeks, a northwester mild as a summer air in a woodland urged her onward even as it urged her accompanying namesakes in the deeps of the unfathomed blue sky, and then the

sweet breathed nor'wester became a north wind, but very warm, being heated by the pleasant sun, and lighter still, so that she moved very slowly, making no sea-song about her bows, and causing no foam-flowers or foam-bells to grow about her path as they do when she is brisk, for then the waves, like blue-kirtled damsels, drop flowers of foam in her queen's path and cheer her happily. Oh, it was a rare spell of sweetest warm weather, but slow as a king's death procession, and the *Flying Cloud's* officers cursed it amazingly.

"Why, here we are and here we stay, seemingly," quoth Mackintosh; "it's own brother or sister to a damned calm, Mr. Budd. We should be doing briskly in these latitudes, laying into it, swash and swash, with lee scuppers bubbling like a glass of fine white wine; and, bless her, here she is, on an even keel like as if she was in London river. Did you ever see the like?"

"Why, yes, sir, I remember in the *Sea Horse* —"

"Oh, damn the *Sea Horse*, begging your pardon," said old Mackintosh. "Of course, I wasn't arguing that it was never so, but that it should be so now makes me say did you ever see the like, in a manner of speaking, don't you understand?"

"Oh, yes, I understand, sir," said the second mate, blandly, and yet somewhat hurt by having had the *Sea Horse* damned so and with such lack of ceremony. She was his last ship, and a man's

last ship is a wonder, and can bring evidence for this or that, as one knows.

"However, there's one likes it," said Mackintosh, "and the Lord forgive me for going against my rightful duty in so speaking of my superior officer, and yet, Mr. Budd, I must speak or burst, seeing this devilish, calmish weather makes me savage, but I think it suits the captain, Mr. Budd."

"Why, sir, I think any weather suits him. Blow or calm, rain or wet, he's as quiet as a rusted vane on any old church. He takes it calmly, sir, very calmly."

"Mark me, Mr. Budd, but I dislike this kind of calmness. I've sailed with him three voyages, and I've seen this calmness grow on him. He'd be calm if the Lascars rose on us and cut our throats from ear to ear."

The second mate growled and touched his mighty arm, as who should say, "Touch me, if you dare."

"It's very remarkable, and Mrs. Dundas is nervous about him, Mr. Budd; I can see it. But I'll say no more, having said too much already. But I want weather, real weather, not this sort of make-believe. Why, 'tis doldrums and horse-latitudes before we're there, and the Western Isles hardly abeam yet!"

"It suits the passengers, suits the skite-hawks," said the second mate, looking down on the full main-deck. By his contemptuous word he meant

the poor devils out of the steerage, now lazing and sleeping and scratching (save the mark!) in the warm sun and very pleasant shadows of the sails.

"It would suit me to have such weather as would put them under hatches," growled the chief, "such cattle lumbering up a man's clean decks! Spit we may have, but where's the polish? Oh, hell, Mr. Budd, but I hate passengers!"

The poor devils, the skite-hawks, the deck lumber, lay about like pigs, on deck and on the main-hatch and the smooth of the booby-hatch for'ard of the scuttle, and they were men and women and children. The children crowed and squealed and laughed, and the men smoked and spat and played cards, and the poor women sewed things and mended and dreamed of Connemara, or Dublin, the dear and dirty, or of some other unknown spot. Among them at times the bare-foot Lascars went lightly, and some of them smiled and some scowled. The old Serang sat on the spare topmast, and was putting a long splice in a fore-topsail-brace, and by him stood Jack Ellison watching his fingers as a cat watches a mouse. That long splice was all the world to the boy that moment. He wanted to know how. So the Serang held it up and said cheerfully, "See, Elzon, *lamba plass*, that long splice, Elzon." There's great content and joy and cheerfulness to be got out of doing a long splice prop-

erly. He's a happy man, who, having done one to his cunning eye and mind, rolls it under foot, and gives it a neat little thumping with a marling-spike, and says, "There, now I'd like a smoke," having earned it whether he can get it or not. It's amazing and almost unknown what bliss can be got from harsh material. People go about being unhappy when there are things to be done. This is a fact; it can hardly be denied.

Ellison went straightway to Bram, who was beginning to look a little less white, and informed him gloriously, but with shy modesty, that he could make a long splice. Bram was sitting on the rail with his arm about a backstay, and he was reading some punk of a novel, some dead rotten wood from the tree of life.

"Good for you, young fellow," said Bram, good-naturedly. "Who taught you?"

"The Serang."

"Amazing old stick," said Bram, yawning. He looked up aloft. "You haven't been up aloft yet, Jack."

"I—I tried yesterday," stammered Jack.

"And couldn't?"

"Mr. Mackintosh called me down," said Jack, hastily.

"I suppose he thought he must," yawned Bram again. "Tell you what, I'll speak to him and go aloft with you."

"Oh, *please*," said Jack, just like any dear kid

promised a pantomime or a sugared bun or a woolly lamb.

So Bram climbed down from the rail and spoke to the mate.

"That boy Ellison wants to go aloft, Mr. Mackintosh, and he said you wouldn't let him yesterday."

"Young devil, can't have him tumbling and breaking his neck, you know," said the mate.

"I'll go and look after him. He's all right," said Bram.

The mate shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I can't have my eyes everywhere, Mr. Gray," he said, at last.

"I'll see it's all hunky, sir," said Bram.

And he went back lightly, but with a kind of odd affected limp he had, to Ellison, who stood open-mouthed.

"It's all right, Jack; come on."

Jack gasped and shut his teeth on the gasp. Then he followed Bram.

A man can only go aloft for the first time once in his life. This is a remarkable truth which is usually arrived at by experience. It can, however, be known *a priori*, by deduction, by inference, and by many logical processes, just as you can go aloft by the port or starboard rigging, or by climbing up various backstays or the chain-runners of the topsail-halliards, if you are fool enough.

This is said civilly to logicians. However, it is sufficient to insist that you can only marry or go aloft for the first time, once.

It's just great!

## CHAPTER XII

### ALOFT

THERE is something inexplicably spiritual in a ship, from whatever standpoint she be viewed, whether from the main-deck or from the taffrail under which the divided waters join and bubble joyfully, or from the end of the jibboom, which is nearest to her purpose, as one may say. She is a magnificent creature, a thing complete, visibly complete and austere adequate (the austerity lying in the nothing beyond her purpose, her splendid economy of means), and her spirituality comes from her completeness; her finite and declared divisions; her lofty silences; her community with the winds and the sea and sky. It comes — ah! who shall say how it comes! — but it is up aloft among the fine tracery of her rigging and her gear that her soul is most manifest. Where, indeed, could it be more manifest than from the high places where one sees her gracious dependence on her winds, while her naked body is in the priestlike font of the sea? Oh, most blessed of created things, of the works of man

working divinely! Every step of hers in the great waters is a baptism.

It were easy to make her material if, indeed, the vision which perceives her were material, for what is she but iron and timber and cordage? Yet iron is wrought out in fire, and timber sweetens in the great woods, and hemp grows in glory under the same skies as the ship. To go aloft is but to climb by ratlines and the shrouds, to hang in the futtock rigging, to clamber over the rim of the top, and then further by the topmast rigging; a mere catalogue if told in wooden words. But told as it should be (help me, oh, most divine sea and wind that speak together as in an organic psalm!), it becomes a pilgrimage, now of pleasure so sweet that nought can equal it, now of tremendous toil that's even sweeter. One leaves the little world of the deck whereon men tread, and the sounds of mankind grow dim, and ever dimmer, until they die away like the breaking of the foam about her bows, and so one ascends among the silent, very splendid machinery of the winds; one lies in the very plumage of her wings, thanking God and the divinity within one which with others wrought so lovely and strong a creature.

Now was the wind warm and gentle, but full and clean and steady as a river of crystal. It breathed upon the two that went aloft, on wan white cheek and ruddy, on the one who knew, and on

him who was virgin as to his mind of ships, and the heart of the one was haughty pride and the heart of the other eager innocence.

They climb, and to old Mac looking up aloft are but two boys, young and foolish. They were two material objects, two things objective, coloured and visible, tangible objects of the world of sense. They weighed so much, and could talk. But to us they are other than this, something akin to the ship herself on her most spiritual side: part of her very spirit, part of her power of achievement, and this though they chattered as boys will climbing a tree. Yet this was the greatest of all trees, where the very birds of God might nest. One saw their wings and named them as sails. They were vans and pinions, clouds of high Heaven.

By now they've reached the top of the main-rigging and stand under the top itself. Jack, the climber of the tree, this giant tree, this most magnificent Beanstalk into the Cloud Land, stood and breathed. Fear and pain of joy got hold of him and he stared about him open-eyed, open-mouthed, perceiving, without knowing it, that the greatest thing on earth or at sea, or up aloft, is to attain a new point of view. Let us drink to such as climb masts or high mountains, or scale the inmost inaccessible fastnesses of the spirit. The main thing is to climb.

You shall hear Jack say the most commonplace

things, in the most natural manner. What of that? Even Dante's visions were strangely material, were they not? Yet had he not been there, been to hell and heaven? How would one expect a youngster devoid of beautiful words, barely furnished with necessary ones, to mouth full-organed the opening divinity of vision in him? It's absurd to ask a babe to describe the Apocalypse. Nevertheless, though he said, "Damn!" it might mean, "This is a real white rose of an hour in my life;" and that hour might remain in his soul's bosom as long as any rose given by Beatrice to an endowed poet and lover.

Indeed, the boy said "Damn" often. It helped; one knows it helped.

"Now, will you come over the rim of the top or go through there?" asked the rare devil the Professor.

"There" was a hole in the top.

"What is it?"

"The Lubber's Hole," said Bram.

The boy flushed and looked at it, and stared overhead and inspected the outward leaning futtock-shrouds and the rim of the top above him. His heart beat fast, but his spirit was monstrosously perturbed at such a notion. How could he, on this his first ascent to heaven, go through any passage named the lubber's hole?

But he temporized.

"I'll go the way you go," he said, meekly, but still with a flush on his cheeks.

And he saw Bram climb above, leaning outward, saw him lift himself, grasp the unseen topmast rigging and draw himself over, and kick a haughty heel at conquered space. It was dramatic, very wonderful! No Col de Lion, no shoulder of the Matterhorn, no arête of windy Monte Rosa, no cornice of the Lyskamm, seemed half so awe-inspiring. For it was wholly new, and therein lay its wonder and its power to draw him.

"I'll come," he gasped, and launched himself into the task, feeling that he must necessarily and by all the laws of space and time and matter fall headlong and be converted into pulp. It took courage, and he drew on his youthful heart for it, and found, Heaven be thanked! sufficient at his godlike account, and so drawing, drew himself up and found himself proudly on the top with Bram, who said, "Well done, sonny!"

Now can you or any one who understands as much as "a, b, c," of the great alphabet of all life, wonder that Jack felt bound with hooks of steel, and grapnels and cables and hawsers to such a man, though he was a debauched young ruffian who knew more Limericks than Latin, and had as little grace as Greek about him? Jack would have blacked his boots, and quite rightly would have blacked them, though they had been seven leagues from heel to toe.

"I say!" said Jack.

He said nothing, though on encouragement he could talk almost as ceaselessly as the spirits that cluster about a vessel's bows. They can be heard most delightfully at night, when the trade-wind blows, if the hearer climbs over the head, and, perhaps, out upon the boom where the jibs sleep and work and dream. But now Jack, uplifted from the common ranks of men, had nothing to say, but everything to feel.

He saw the gigantic curve of the mainsail beneath him with the gear lying across its bosom. It was the king of sails, the monarch, the great doer. He inspected it curiously; noted the great spread of the yard, the jackstay to which the sail was made fast, the truss, the great chain slings. Sunlight poured on the sail; he saw shadows on the deck. The air seemed finer already; his lungs filled like big sails; he could go. He was in the middle of the machinery of things: the topsail was before him. Aye, and his hand was on the topmast rigging. Bram slung round and started climbing. Jack followed.

As he climbed he had a sense of losing the ship, of leaving her. There was a magical lightness in her tracery, for all the strength of her proved rigging and well-tried gear. It was the infinite lightness of beauty and simple adequacy that the beholder notes in the loveliest Gothic architecture. She seemed fragile, but was not. The great

solidity of the ship lay beneath: the hull narrowed tremendously: aloft the sky opened, the sky still cut by stays, the mizzen t'gallant stay, the mizzen-royal, the sky so heavenly blue over the wrinkled blue sea. He passed the belly of the upper topsail, noting with anxious eyes the spilling lines, the bull's-eyes in the foot of the sail; the topsail-sheets of iron, and gear he could not name. The reef-points were a joy to him; they hung in a steady row; they looked like good workmen, like soldiers of manilla.

So they came to the cross-trees and sat astride them abaft the belly of the t'gallantsail.

"Well?" said Bram, casually. He sat without touching anything. It was a boast. He was a splendid braggart always. But Jack held tight to the mast and the royal-halliards going away down past him.

"Oh!" said Jack. To develop that "Oh!" were a task indeed. For it meant that this was a very wonderful world, a bright, light, splendid world, and that if a ship was a wonder, her lofty spars were astronomy compared with land surveying. She was sheer grace, magical adequacy, and her cross-trees a throne, a great observatory, a peak. It was joy, a great terrible joy, to think that one might and could fall. It was a risk, and what's so good as that? Life is the more immense as one sees the chance of losing it. Death is the great adventure, after all.

Though the sea was calm and the wind light upon the cross-trees, the Greenhorn felt sweet motions, felt that calmness was but relative. There was a beautiful musical thrill about him; it was as if a far faint organ played, as if spiritual beings touched harps of magic. There was a delicious thrill under and around and in him. His heart responded; he felt the tonic of the open, high world. He looked down and clutched tightly.

That was Mr. Mackintosh! How strange it seemed that he should be so little when at his word strange things might happen. He had clothed the *Flying Cloud* in her majesty, had tended her in her trouble, had stood by her as she slept cradled in the lifting surges when she lay to but a little time ago. The decks looked warm, comfortable, earthlike. A pang went through the boy. This was fine, but it was dreadfully lonely. He desired to go down from aloft. And yet — there was the royal-yard above him and the sky-sail. Could he?

Bram dangled a careless leg over destruction. But his bright eyes of blue were brighter still.

"How do you like it, Jack?" he asked.

"I'm thinking —"

"What?"

"What it must be up here at night when it's blowing hard."

"Aye, my lad, that's the time!"

For Jack, who had the elements of imagination in him, the sun went down and the wind blew and the sea got up. He looked at the foot-ropes of the t'gallant-yard, and in his mind climbed out upon them, and with the Lascars picked up the sail. He was very much afraid, and still more fearful of showing it.

Then he came back to the cross-trees and saw Bram with a pipe in his mouth.

"Let's go on the royal-yard," said Bram.

Jack's mind, or body perhaps, said that he would much rather not. It was ridiculous to go up there, highly ridiculous. What good would it do? That was what his body wanted to know as he rose carefully and reluctantly and followed. Every step he took was forced now; his reason clamoured against him. He hated Bram very much.

And he found the royal-yard much more hazardously magnificent than the cross-trees. He quite loved Bram for saying "Let's go up to the royal-yard." He even imitated Bram after a moment's pause and sat down on the yard with his heels on the bellying quiet sail. He hugged the mast tightly.

Now he could see under the foot of the skysail. He looked down on the fore-royal and far over it across the open sea. The ship itself was lost; there was no ship, nothing but a little glimpse of the foc'sle head under the roached foot of the

lower fore-topsail. A mannikin moved there. He heard a faint far voice speak. The thrill of the rigging was greater yet than it had been in the cross-trees; it was more musical, more vibrant, stronger. A musical ear would have heard subtle tones, overtones, harmonics, and some might have assigned them their stations in the great instrument of the winds.

There came a dissonance.

"Like to go on the skysail-yard, sonny?"

Insatiable beast, the trier of man! Jack looked at him malevolently and saw him staring aloft to where that white bird the lone main-skysail spread its vans to the most heavenly air. The mast itself seemed now but a pole, the yard a thin wand; the backstays and the stays but threads. Jack said he was a vulgarian to bellow there in heaven, at the foot of the great white throne, and yet he knew he was an angel saying "Come." The upward journey was not finished yet and only a recreant would pause now.

There were no more ratlines, but Bram grasped the mast and swarmed it, and said, when he straddled the yard, "Steady does it." It was a saint encouraging a catechumen struggling in faith for sight. Jack drew in his breath and took hold of his young courage and climbed. He swung his leg across the yard and sat shaking and triumphant. Oh, amazing —

Ye Gods of starry depths and the pathless wastes

of sun-washed ocean, who shall stand upon the skysail-yard of any *Flying Cloud* and not declare your glory? There are untouched virgins of the rocks and snows who still baffle mankind's ardours and frown or smile in chastity; but still there's no such height in Alp or Himalaya or Cordillera as the summit that we stand on now. No Golden Throne nor Illimani, nor white Dom, nor Aconcagua, nor Tupungato, lone and glacier-bearing, has a majesty so overpowering as the amazing skysail-yard. Below lies the world itself, the ship, and the world is nothing; here on clouds equal in grace to those of the nigh heaven itself, we float up-borne, and advance into the celestial air that's crystal. We breathe God's air, drink divinest dews, sip from the very bowl of azure that holds the stars and sun, and look down as gods ourselves upon the banded emerald and amethystine pavement of old Ocean.

There's no such glory as the glory of the ship, and no such glory in the ship as when we lift our eyes and hearts upon her nearest reach to heaven. Would it were mine to sing the Swan Song of the great-sailed ships that soon shall be no more, and even now sail over the rim of the great seas to sink and be for ever unknown!

The sacred neophyte and the unsacred white-faced wonderful devil who led him there, sat up aloft for an hour. There to my mind they sit yet, brown face and white, debauchee and innocent,

half divine and half diabolic. In so pure and holy a spot, while the *Flying Cloud* moved before her attendant winds, let us leave them for awhile. There should be a new page now. There is a great argument for leaving fair white pages at times in books. Thereon they who are capable should write the unwritten that's in their hearts, in their tears, their joys, their anguish, and their prayers.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ON THE SKYSAIL - YARD

HEAVEN'S own air breathed on them deliciously, warm as some dear woman's breath. But only the boy noticed it, felt it, felt it warm his heart. The pale-faced leader talked at random of himself, of home, of the ship, of the skipper.

"There's something amiss with the ship. Our skipper's a queer dead fish with fits of craziness in him. I'm pals with old Mac, smoked with him in his berth and told him yarns. He says there are times the old man wakes up and makes him tremble. Ha! he can carry on, old Mac says; can show his t'gallan'sails when another man would flinch at reefed topsails. Old boy Mac says he's seen him swing his main-t'gallan'sail close-hauled, when a Yankee (a Yankee, mark you!) was reefed down before the wind. So mad a man — aye, and in half a hurricane he'll set stunsails till the booms bend like coach-whips and away they go, crash! Who'd believe it to see that little nid-nodder with his head on his breast! But I've seen things, men and women; oh! the things I've seen, in Calcutta too. I could tell you

things, my lad. I've seen everything, and the girls love me, by the Lord they do. One of the worst and prettiest slapped me on the back in our town when my mother was with me, and she shouted 'What cheer, Bram,' till the street rang! But the skipper there, he's a puzzler. I never was ship-mates with his like. No more was I ever ship-mates with a skysail, damn pocket-handkerchiefs and sailor-teasers I call them. It's the same with stunsails. I like being here, though, sonny my lad, there's something fine and clean about it somehow. I don't care for girls here; girls have been my ruin, on my soul they have, and I love 'em dearly, dearly. But on the skysail-yard I don't really think of 'em. Lord, now, just think of it, no man on earth ever kissed a pretty girl on a skysail-yard when it was crossed! That's a strange notion, isn't it? but I daresay a round dozen of riggers hugged their Molls on this very stick when it lay in the yard. I'm a devil to think of odd things, eh, a rare devil! Mac — old Mac — said he saw I was a rare devil when he spotted me. Old Mac's a good soul, a good seaman, I know. But the skipper's a case; he beats me, the damned old nid-nodder with his head on his breast. There's something amiss with him, and his wife's a rare handsome sad-looking devil. She knows what's wrong. I'll ferret it out some time or another. I'm a rare judge of character, so I'm telling you, my boy!"

He talked and the wind blew, and the *Flying Cloud* moved onward, carrying him and the sea-child through celestial ways.

"I love it," said Jack.

"Let's go below, I'm tired of it," cried Bram.

"Oh, no," said Jack.

But still he followed, and found the warm deck like a home. As he came near the poop he saw the captain's wife. She was very beautiful, but might have been nursing death at her bosom. Oh, so pale she was! So pale is the wan foam, and yet she carried a high, sweet colour when she was happy as she could be. Oh, so pale she was!

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE

WHEN things went well and happily Jane Dundas was like any red rose. But then, she was a woman, and sat with sorrow or grief or lonely apprehension (how lonely sorrow forecasted seems!); she took her blood into her heart, into her bosom, and it left her white. It sank within her like the mercury of the glass when there's a nigh gale. Now, indeed, she had her griefs, but spoke not of them. They spoke for her in her face. She whom Bram had called a devil of a woman, she whom the blackguard Scott had praised for strength and beauty, drooped like a lily over her fears and her boy. The others, old horny-handed Mac, or mighty-armed Budd, or pallid Bram, or the Youth, might wonder, might ponder, might discuss, but she knew. The nid-nodding skipper was to them the skipper, a man with his head on his breast, but oh, God! he had been, and yet was, the man with his head upon her bosom; he was the father of her sturdy boy; her husband; her adored; her hoped for. He had been, she swore, a splendid man, sufficient.

adequate, but now his chin was on his breast; he moped, he slept, he avoided the obvious duties of his high place, and left old Mac and young Budd to do for him. She had seen him splendidly awake, managing the seas; now he slept in a puddle, lay like a drunkard in a gutter, as it were. It was grievous.

She had fought him, had been high, proud, domineering, and had been conquered by his dreadful inertia. Let her, like Sisyphus, roll this stone of a man into the heights, yet back he came again. And for what reason? Oh, it was horrible for her, seeing her strength and beauty, which she knew so well, to think he cared so little for her gifts. Once she had been his star, by whose altitudes he computed his place in the world. She had showed from her cloud and he took his time from her. Now he wandered, never looking to any star, either to her or to the heavens.

"I've only my boy, my child, the child he gave me," she moaned, tragically. There was the capability of tragedy in her: an amazing capability of woe. But there's no tragedy in heaven or on earth or on the ocean like that of inward power negatived and brought down by another's weakness. There's a strange theology which avers, without high laughter, that God Himself needs the help of man to bring out His purpose, to make His flowers of the soul seed in eternity. This goddess needed help indeed, and found none.

Oh, how she had loved him!

"The damned old nid-nodder with his head on his breast," said Bram.

So those who love may be brought low, till youth, which knows nothing and is not afraid for itself, scorns them.

She found her man in his room. He lay upon his bed, silent, fast asleep, heavy, motionless.

"I'll wake him," she said. Her face flushed as she approached him. She put her hand on his shoulder and then withdrew it.

"Two years ago," said her heart to her, "one touch would have roused him. He'd have sprung up, laughing, gay, strong as the sea itself. He had such merry laughter; it pleased me, made me so glad. On his tongue were honied phrases, the prettiest words, such jewels of talk as women love to hang upon their bosoms of dear remembrance. His kisses were glad and so sweet. There was a bright manliness about him; he was eager. Not a boy in the ship could beat him if he chose to run aloft; he could climb. Now, alas! he's but a block, a silent, a solitary; he's left his love, though he's by her. The mates look at him, and wonder and despise him."

She sat down and wondered where his soul was and by what means of black magic it was taken from him. What had altered and changed him? What spell or incantation, or what great drug had robbed him of his powers?

She could not answer.

She tried to wake him and could not, and yearned to cry out, to scream. She listened for his breath, and found his beating heart, and was a little comforted. But for shame and love she could have cried out for old Mackintosh, saying, "What is it? What's wrong with my beloved?"

The captain sighed and turned over heavily while she wept.

On deck there was the merriest laughter. Bram was up to some devilment, no doubt, as the *Flying Cloud* went to the south'ard with her vans abroad in the warm light air.

Let's on deck, mate, and hear what's doing! Why should we linger in this cabin and see a woman weep, and a man sleep, when there's laughter on the main-deck, and sun, and light, and youth learning? Oh, the damned nid-nodder, poor devil! Well, there were those on board the *Flying Cloud* who came very nigh knowing what was wrong with him. There's strange knowledge in the East! Do you begin to understand, mate? But let's on deck.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE LEARNER OF THE SEAS

THEY were having a good, jolly time on deck, for every one was busy; every one doing or laughing, talking or listening — that is, among the passengers, who were mostly on the main-hatch or thereabouts. On this same hatch there was a coir hawser coiled neatly, so that in its coil was a kind of well, good to put youngsters into. The rim of it was nice to sit on. The shadow of the fore-topsails sheltered it from the sun, which was up in a dappled sky which looked tender and sweet — too sweet and tender for a seaman, indeed. There was, of course, a separation between the steerage and the second cabin; but, nevertheless, who should prevent the steerage laughing when Bram buffooned and preached and lectured and told the second-cabin fellows strange yarns? There was no one but him after a little while to be seen or heard. Talk? Aye, he could talk like a clergyman, and beat any clergyman in or out of the pulpit.

In the sweet weather — weather that allows work — the Lascars were busy, under the mates and the Serang. The deck was full of them, for

they were setting up the rigging just a trifle, for it needed it, or some of the backstays did. There was little silence among them; they often chattered gaily like monkeys, on deck or aloft. For some were aloft, having the better part away from the officers, putting on new seizings, looking at the foot-ropes, spying weakness here or there, and setting it right. The deck was a fair, so to speak, a gay bazaar; clothes were hung out to dry on the rigging for'ard, Lascars' shirts, red and blue. Further aft the steerage women had rigged up lines for their washing, and never had such a good drying day in dear, damp Ireland. Now they rested from their labours and saw the wonderful labour of the ship; for a ship's a house, and has its endless work. It begins, but never ends till she's in the hands of the ship-breakers or in the breakers and on the rocks.

"Aya, *khinchna*, pull," said Budd. So some of them lay back on the fall of the tackle and the greased lanyard in the dead-eye took another inch or so. "That will do you."

"Accha, sahib," said the Serang.

On the whole these exiles were happy or not unhappy. Some day they would get home to India, though it was a long way round by Australia. Even Mahomet, the huge Sidi boy, a lonely negro, one of the descendants of slaves in the North-west Provinces, was as happy as a sandboy. He had magnificent muscles; they showed under his

shining skin very beautifully. It was a pleasure to him to use them when the sun shone. He showed his teeth and looked splendid. See him if a coir rope broke under his hands when he lay back and hauled! That showed he was pulling; he laughed and crowed to think of his strength. There wasn't a man on board but Budd who was his equal at that.

The Serang was in his element. No white sedate bo'sun he; he flew round like a teetotum, was everywhere at once, cuffing Said, banging Chotoh, kicking lazy Pondi from Pondicherry, and saying "accha, sahib" to the mate. Then to some lazy loafer:

"*Tum, kahan Khalasi-ke-kam sikta*, where did you learn sailing, *sooar?*"

Then:

"*Lechal gir gir*, hand over hand, cheerly!"

On the whole a good man, after all. But then Mackintosh was good, and so was Budd. Men need good men over them, and the head of them all needs to be lord of himself. The captain slept as the work went on, never showed up as his woman cried.

The wind for days was as steady as the North-east Trade itself. There was strangely little sail-trimming to be done, until they came to the horse-latitudes, now near at hand. But the *Flying Cloud*, that fast clipper, was slow indeed; she asked for a great wind.

"This'll be a long passage, a terrible long one," said old Mac, to himself. "Thirty days out, and where are we? Last time we were nineteen days to the Line. Oh, but she scooted then!"

Now it was a drifting match, and there was time to turn her inside out; time to paint her again. There was time for Bram to buffoon, time for young Ellison to learn; time for comedy, for life, for tragedy.

Young Ellison learned now; learned the nature of tackles; he knew a handy-billy from a harmonium, could rig a luff tackle even; knew a snatch-block when he saw it: eighteen thread when he felt it, and could say whether a rope was europe or manilla, or coir. He lent a hand, too, tailed on the fall of the tackle, and felt his muscles. It was fine. He helped, and found it good to help; it gave him robustness of his mind in his self-respect. Day by day, hour by hour, he learned something fresh; the leads of all the gear, so that in the dark he knew the main-royal-clew-line or the halliards of the outer jib, or the tripping-lines of the staysails. He investigated the powerful nature of the windlass and the strength of the capstans, and down in the fore-peak with the old Serang he discovered where things were stowed and what was what. For the Serang was very friendly with him, curiously friendly, and even made him useful, for when they shifted the hard

weather suit of sails for the fair weather suit, Jack read the tallies of the sails for him.

"Ha, where Elzon, where Elzon?" asked the bo'sun many a time. There wasn't a happier soul on deck than useful Jack at such times, when he pulled out heavy sails and named them the inner jib or outer, or the mizzen-royal, or this staysail or the other, or the fore-course, or topsails. And the Serang taught him the Lascar names for sails — the *burra serh*, or mainsail; the *tirkat*, or fore-sail; or *gavi*, the topsail; *tirkat gavi*, the fore-topsail. So with the yards and the other gear. In a month he knew them all; aye, he could blushinglly have given orders in the bastard Hindostanee of the men. He knew that *tara* was a star; the words for east and west, north and south, and many words of insult, such as the Serang used, or the second mate, when some fool or loafer showed his folly or laziness. And he loved to say laughingly, when the work was over and the beautiful day died, "*Jab sab hogaya, site maro*;" "When the work is done, pipe down." One day, when old Mac lost the Lascar word for "*vang*," who so pleased as Jack to say "'*Trendal*,' Mr. Mackintosh."

"Bright lad that," said Mackintosh, and Jack went away in glory.

Now they came to the horse-latitudes, the calms betwixt the northwesterly winds and the region of the trades, and it was "Trim sail" all

the day till men's hands grew sore with hauling on the braces. But on the whole the *Flying Cloud* was a happy ship, and though none but Jack, so far, went aloft, the rest of the passengers often tailed on the braces, and lent a hand so that she worked easy. It was then a case of "walk away with her," and round the yards came. One has to catch each breath of wind, each flaw, each cat's-paw lightly ruffling the blue of the great deep, for only so can the ship crawl across these latitudes, hoping for the Northeast Trades to bring her to the Line. Often, very often, the Lascars were called out at night (for Lascars do not work in watches like white seamen), to trim the yards. Jack heard them often enough, and sometimes came on deck in trousers and shirt, and barefoot lent a hand at midnight, and sometimes, when the yards were trimmed, had a few words with Mr. Mackintosh or Budd. In the daytime he had no right on the poop, but at night, on old Mackintosh's invitation, he would go up and talk with him. To be noticed by the mate was honour indeed; better than many a star or ribbon worn by recreants and traitors and those who sell their fellows.

"'Tis a rotten enough business," said old Mac, one quiet moonlight night, "but you should have been a seaman, Ellison."

What are stars and ribbons, ye who bear them, to this high commendation of a seaman?

Sometimes in these great starry nights, when the wind began to hold truer and came more out of the northeast, old Mackintosh, who hated the silences of the middle watch and its great loneliness, told the boy that he might come up on the poop if so be it chanced that he did not sleep. On such occasions, never lost by Jack, the old mate talked of a thousand things of the sea, reminiscences of his youth when he went coast-wise about tempestuous Britain, and of his later days when in "tall-water" ships he sailed the great seas and rounded the Horn, or battled with the changing gales off the pitch of the Cape. He told him the story of the great winds, naming them, and spoke of typhoons in the China Seas off the treacherous Paracels, or in the Bay of Bengal, or nigh to Mauritius, or by the Bermudas. He told him plain tales of dreadful wrecks and stories of castaways and of men who were reputed to have turned cannibals in the highest extremity of sea famine, or to have become blood drinkers in appalling calms. And he explained curiously the strange nature of ice and the sailing bergs, flat-topped or pinnaced, and told him of their splendour in the sun, when they showed heavenly-blue caves and shining spears of heaven-piercing crystal, and did it in plain good unpoetic words that put high poetry to shame. And then some nights, when his sturdy mind remembered his struggles with the first mysteries of the high mystery of sea

navigation, he explained to the lad the nature of time — apparent time that is the sun's, and mean time that is the clock's — and told him of the equation of time, and spoke of finding the latitude as well as the longitude, thereby teaching him vaguely the nature of the sextant, which he showed him later in his cabin. And the old man, being proud of his very difficult accomplishments, dilated upon lunars, whereby one uses the moon to correct the chronometer and find out its error, or correct its rate, and he explained double altitudes of the sun or of a star and the useful nature of logarithms. And he further spoke of the difficulties of the compass, its dip, its variation, and its deviation in iron ships, according as their head lay when they were built, and the great bugbear of the seaman, its heeling error, and, thereby increasing his own hold upon his own knowledge, showed the boy how much there was to know.

And all this made Jack Ellison very proud and not a little humble, which was good for him, seeing that he was learning fast. And the power of learning fast is a trap, oftentimes making good lads overproud when they yet know nothing.

In after-times those lonely nights of learning his own deep ignorance of the great seas and the world of knowledge came back to him often enough, and he recalled the good old seaman gratefully, and re-pictured to his mind the poop of the *Flying Cloud* and the dim aspect of her

clouds of canvas and the faint sea-sparkle on the ocean as the mate talked.

There's very great learning to be got from the simple-minded and the strong, though in the estimation of the great ones of the earth they are no more than creatures for their use and comfort. I drink out of the cup of sea-memory to the old mate, and if he yet sails the seas and strokes a white beard, there's no better man to drink to, though he had his failings.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE NORTHEAST TRADE - WIND

THE trade-wind — the Northeast Trade — in that year and season, was of peculiar weakness. It lacked its usual strength, its common quiet urgency. From latitude  $30^{\circ}$  N., where the *Flying Cloud*, after emerging from the calms of Cancer, found the first steady breath of the trade, or the wind that she hoped for, to latitude  $15^{\circ}$  N., she hardly moved a degree to the south'ard every day. At times she failed to get steerageway on her, though that was rare indeed, for she had a peculiar power in light winds, and responded to any gratefully. Yet still she moved under all her loftiest kites, for now the skipper, suddenly waking for a time, became more urgent. It was said of him that he had a passion for stunsails. There were those who called him Stunsail-Boom Dundas. Now he showed the reason for his name, and had the booms rigged out and the sails set, so that the *Flying Cloud* had the loveliest wings and looked a cloud indeed.

The days were mild and soft, though here and there within the vaulted heavens sailed a ship of cloud, which anon melted, foundering in the blue

And others then arose and sailed again, as ships may suddenly appear in the magic of the sea, springing as it were from nothing, out of a squall or out of night. It was a gracious and delightful time to many, and all hands laboured not uncheerfully, and even the skipper smiled to see the men, aloft rigging out the booms, or those steady-ing them taut with the boom-braces and boom-burtons. Jack Ellison helped, for now he went aloft when he would and worked with the Lascars, and no one said "nay" to him, not even the skipper. It was a pleasant daring deed for him to lie out along the dancing foot-rope of the main-yard and see beneath him the pure waters of the deep sea, and once, when he laid hold of the lift and stood upon the boom in its boom-iron, he felt a man of the sea. So they set the lower and topmast-stunsails, and the *Flying Cloud* in the light air of the lazy trade-wind, barely felt them. But Budd said to the mate, "You say the captain sets 'em when it blows hard, sir?" That was true enough.

"Why, Mr. Budd, I've seen him rig the booms out in a gale, the maddest thing. He loves to see them bend, to hear them crack," said Mackintosh.

"I don't understand that way of carrying on, sir," said Budd, shaking his thick head.

"There's different men and different natures, Mr. Budd."

"Aye, sir," said Budd; "'different ship, different fash,' as the Dutchman said when he went aft to haul down the jib."

"Wait till we're running down the Easting," said Mackintosh, thoughtfully. "There'll be broken booms for firewood then, or he's different or I'm a Dutchman myself."

It's a strange world we sail in among the stars. "What planet is that?" cries some god on the lookout on the ship Jupiter, let's say.

"The Earth," answers our captain, sadly.

"You were reputed missing. The gods wouldn't insure you, captain!"

"Aye, we've had a Flying Dutchman's beat about the Cape of Eternal Winds," says the Earth captain, wearily, and the gloomy ship of thunder and gray hearts and grayer hopes lays her course anew for some port among the stars of time, a far, far harbour.

But there are singers on the earth and seas, and the *Flying Cloud*, a speck among the immensities, had her laughter and her songs. Bram the Devil, as some called him, set them dancing, set them laughing, and made the pastry-cook sing, indeed. Even Watson sang, and Scott the blackguard and scallywag, and the pawnbroker, piped feebly. They set Jack, too, on the main-hatch, and he sang with an untrained voice which had a musical tang in it. There were women, too, who sang. Finnegan's pretty sister sang in the dark,

when no one could see her modest blushes, and Finnegan himself with some humour sang "Finnegan's Wake" and "Milligan's Ball." It was sweet and fine and happy to hear them. Mrs. Dundas listened from the poop with most of her heart beneath her man's feet as he walked to and fro and said nothing. And Bram took a concertina from the pawnbroker and out of it extracted rude music. What's a sailor without a knife, or a ship without a concertina? Does that unhappy ship sail the seas? Then she's as rare as a steamship with no Scotchman in the engine-room. There's great melody in your concertina if it can be brought out. It can sing and groan, and be as happy as a quick-time chanty or as sad as "The Lowlands, Low." But in the *Flying Cloud* there were no chanties sung; there was nothing but the Lascars' hopeless wail of "Aylah, Allah, Aylah!" 'Tis a sad ship without chanties, after all. There's much melody in them, and depth too, which is dug out of life itself.

You should hear them, mate, some time or other.

"Sing you devilish patty-cake man, sing you cooker of cheese-cakes, sing you maker of three-cornered and other tarts," said Bram the Devil.

"What shall I sing?" asked the meek tart-maker.

Some one asked for "Belle Mahone," and most of them reinforced him.

"Aye, there's a chorus to 'Belle Mahone,' 'tis a sweet song."

"I'd like a merrier song."

"Merrier can come after."

Some would be sad. It was a starry even, with the moon like a silver scimitar unscabbarded, drawn by night against the day. The water shone star-spangled and went away into the round world splendidly. Every sail drew, though once and again, on a lone heave of the sea when the *Flying Cloud* lifted lightly, they flapped against the mast with a pleasant patter hardly louder than the file-firing of the reef-points on the belly of the top-sails. A little light came upon the main-deck from the steward's cabin and from old Mac's, where he sat thinking of his wife and children, or of his captain, or of some problem in life's navigation. On the foc'sle-head the Lascars chattered and crooned; outside the galley the *bhandaris* ground up pepper, cardamums, chillies, coriander, and garlic for curry — grinding them between two flat stones as they squatted on their hams in the light from the galley lamps. How they loved garlic; the men chewed it native and natural and unmixed. The smell of it came level on the wind and sickened the unaccustomed. But it was pretty to see the white-clad squatting *bhandaris* grind the paste they loved. What's rice without curry? Given curry, one can eat an old shark though he stinks in the pan amazingly.

But all the time the pastry-cook sang "Sweet Belle Mahone," and the Irish girls felt dew of tears upon their rosy cheeks and their eyes were, like violets, dewy.

"Wait for me at Heaven's gate,  
Sweet Belle Mahone."

Ah ! who was this "Belle Mahone," indeed, that she should wait for the poor pastry-cook ? And yet his angelic voice went aloft among the sails and to the very stars, to heaven's gate itself. Could any pastry-cook with such a voice be wholly bad ? Surely he must have wrought bravely among pastry at times. The captain's wife shed tears as she listened, and young Jack crept away to the fore-rigging and climbed among the stars to the fore-royal, and then he heard the far-off sweet singer singing divinely. Jack himself was at heaven's gate, and his "Belle Mahone," though truly he knew of none even if she walked the blessed earth, leaned out from the gold bar of heaven. Oh, beloved woman of the lilies and the stars !

"Sweet Belle Mahone !"

They sang the chorus sweetly and in harmony, and the sound of it ascended divinely, so that the rounded bellying sails caught it and flung it to and fro among them, till it was like a dimly echoed anthem in the clerestory of a great cathedral.

It is the sweetest song and they were simple

singers. Perhaps the very Trade-Wind rejoiced. It was no commercial wind, but the very breath of heaven.

“ Wait for me at Heaven’s gate ! ”

Well, if there be no heaven above or below or beyond the darkness that hems in the starry universe in which the earth sails with her soul’s sails set and waiting for the immortal wind of immortality, there is yet heaven here below at certain hours, and these immortal hours know not time. They are summoned by sweet voices of men and women and the songs of the wind and sea, and the prayers of the lonely and the works of those who love their fellows and hope even while they love.

“ Belle Mahone,” are your white feet in Paradise, set in amaranth and dew ? Oh, surely, while your lover lives, and when he dies, what is Paradise to you, sweet?

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TROPIC CALMS

Now among the days came hours of full calm, halcyon days, as when the halcyon bird sat upon its fabled nest in smooth and windless seas. These hours lengthened, and the wind lessened even when it blew, so that there were times when the *Flying Cloud* lay motionless for half a day or more. Sometimes these calms came at night, and then, perchance, the heavens clouded and grew dark, and a big rain-squall emptied itself upon the quiet floors of the ocean. The sound of the rain upon the sea was pleasant and very curious to those who had not heard it before, and there were times when the sea whitened with heavy rain though not a drop fell on board on the warm, dry decks.

"It's curious to hear," said Jack to himself. And once afar in a lucid even he saw a tall water-spout, moving strangely like a dervish in some sacred drama in a solitary temple. The spout moaned and died away. There were great things to be seen at sea, and in calms it seemed that the very machinery of the winds had broken down. The *Flying Cloud* lay like a dead bird, or a bird

asleep. But indeed its life went on whether it were calm or whether there were variable airs from the north and east. For now, indeed, at ten degrees from the Line they could say there was no more of the trade-wind which comes from the northeast, and they began to think of the Southeast Trade, which is ever of a stronger nature and sometimes reaches across the Line three or four, or even five degrees of latitude. But, even though it came far north, now there were full five degrees of the tropic calms to pass through, and they are greater calms than those of Cancer or of Capricorn.

And at last the time came when there was no wind for three whole days, and the ship boxed the compass ceaselessly, with her head all round the compass, as though she hunted by scent for a breeze. For there is no calm in which the ship will not move, whatever the cause may be, whether it be currents or the attraction of the moon or sun or stars, or something electric, secret, and occult. In the quietest night of the immense Pacific the ship stirs uneasily or haply feels something drawing her, or there is a solid movement, though hardly to be measured, of the sea itself, perhaps because it is sucked up by the sun or feels the pressure of the air changing in far latitudes.

In these days men grew irritable, for they liked not the amazing quiet, which is alien from any

man's spirit, but alien most of all from the unquiet spirit of the seaman. His very life is motion, and in a calm he cannot breathe properly. It may be that he is, in the depths of his heart, afraid. For calms have lasted long and thirsty men have died in them, and empty ships have been found — ships empty of live men. But mostly he is perturbed by the mere lack of motion. This is a ship's idleness, and for so busy a thing to be idle is uncanny, almost evil. And in a well-found, well-kept ship, after a few days of such quiet it is hard to find work, hard even to make it, and without work and plenty of it men begin to sour on the seas and to growl and to think of pleasure and to hate those over them. So calms have bred murders and mutinies, and seamen have become pirates because of them. It is better to fight the westerly winds of the Horn in winter than to lie in lazy heat on painted oily seas, and no seamen will say otherwise. For they know their hearts.

But for those who were not seamen, or not yet become such by work and love of the sea, there was at first a great delight in a calm. Young Jack Ellison found inspiration in it, even as he did in a strong wind, for it meant knowledge of sea conditions, and instructed him in the history of the sea. There was no sight of the sea which did not give him pleasure, such as seeing the light in Palma when they passed the dry volcanic Canaries. How strange it is at sea to behold a light

afar, knowing that it is on the warm land. And a water-spout or a squall or a calm taught him new things, and there's nothing like learning realities, or things seen. For though there are real things in books, few are they who can show them.

And then they were coming down to the Line, to the Equator ! That was magnificent. Some day soon the *Flying Cloud* would be in southern latitudes, and even now he knew the Southern Cross and many of the big southern stars. The Cross disappointed him sadly; he expected a blazing constellation and great shining stars of the first magnitude, and then he saw how poor the Cross was, hardly finer or more conspicuous than Arcturus Minor. He complained of it mo bitterly to Bram.

"Aye," said Bram, "I thought they'd be like lamps myself, when I first saw 'em."

But it was wonderful enough to see the northern constellations go under, and to see those of the south rise up out of the great waters. And then to think that here was Africa and there America, and yonder Cape San Roque !

'Tis a poor soul that wouldn't be satisfied though the Southern Cross was paste, after all, and Jack felt unutterably satisfied, full of the most everlasting joy, while the lazy *Flying Cloud* pointed north and east and south and west with her jibboom. There were happy pleased souls aboard her, but none more happy, more content.

Why, the old Serang taught him to use a palm and needle, and when the decks were full of sails being overhauled he actually did a little useful work and made a new blister on his hands. There's joy for you!

"That damned palm has given me a blister," he said with the fattest content.

There were unhappy souls on board, and there's no doubt the unhappiest were the skipper and his wife. The "old man" seldom showed on deck all the time of the calm. Indeed he rarely came to meals in the cabin: if he ate it was in his own room.

"He's ill," said Jane Dundas to Mackintosh. There were times when she wanted to speak openly to old Mac, wanted to ask his advice. But something stayed her speech; she feared something, and dreaded lest the mate might have suspicions like her own. And yet what suspicions had she? They were vague as a shred of cloud that forms and dies in the zenith when there's a big calm.

"Oh, yes, he's sleeping," said she.

Now Mac had no suspicion. Indeed, how should he have it? The one great thing he knew was drink. So many captains, having come to be captains at last, take to drink in their solitude. For it is necessary, owing to the nature of man, that the captain should seclude himself and be a power apart. He cannot, unless he be indeed a strong man, use familiarity with his officers,

lest his authority be made weak thereby. He sits alone and lives alone, with the power of a king, and is often unhappy. Into the cup of his solitude he often puts alcohol. But this man never drank. He said so, and never showed signs of it.

"It must be some illness, something of the brain," said old Mac, "but I never saw the like."

All the world knew the captain was ill, but their life went on just the same. They talked, and loved, and made love (oh, but Chips the carpenter was very sweet on Mrs. Winter, a little widow in the steerage!), and quarrelled day by day as if there were no tragedy afoot. They had their little world and the captain had his. Yet sometimes Jack and Bram talked of him.

"The poor old nid-nodder must be sick enough," said Bram.

"He's never on deck now, Bram."

"No, Jack; I wonder what's wrong? I hate a funeral at sea, Jack."

"Oh!" said Jack, "have you seen one?"

"Two; it's a sad thing. One fell from aloft, stove his head in on the main-deck. The other died of consumption. I'd like to know what's wrong with the skipper."

"He's not dying, anyhow," said Jack. "Who says so?"

"I never said so, but it's queer."

That night Jack and the old Serang, who were

certainly great friends, got to talking of the captain. The Serang invited him into his berth, which he shared with one of the *Tindels*.

"You come, have smoke, Elzon," said the Serang.

The Serang's a great person, as one knows; he's lord and boss of the crew under the officers, and, though he was a Malay, Jack was flattered. Besides, to sit apart with a Malay and talk with him in broken English and bastard Lascar Hindostanee was an experience.

So the Serang squatted cross-legged in his bunk and Jack sat upon a chest and smoked his pipe.

"You good boy, Elzon, I t'ink," said the Serang.

"Thank you, Serang," replied Jack.

"You 'elp me, Elzon, dose sail tallies, eh?" And "Elzon" smiled.

"You t'ink Kaptan Sahib very ill, Kaptan Sahib *bimar*?"

"They say so, Serang."

The Serang shook his head.

"Him good kaptan. What you t'ink?"

"What?" asked Jack.

"What makee kaptan sick, Elzon?"

His little twinkling eyes were very bright.

"I don't know, Serang."

The Serang shifted uneasily on his seat.

"Elzon, I t'ink —"

"What you think, Serang?"

"I t'ink I savvy why Kaptan Sahib ill, Elzon."

Jack stared at him and laid aside his pipe.

"What is it then?" he asked breathlessly.

The Serang leaned forward and touched him.

"All the men t'ink they savvy, Elzon. *Tindels*, all of 'em, t'ink, and the *Sukkanees* they t'ink, and I — Serang — I t'ink. Some they laugh, but I no laugh, I very sorry. I t'ink Kaptan Sahib very good kaptan. I sail with him two year — Australia, Kalighat, and Bilitani. Him very good to Khalasis."

He stopped and shook his head.

"But what's wrong with him, Serang?" asked Jack. "What is it?"

"You no tell if I say, Elzon?" asked the Serang.

"I won't tell."

"Then I t'ink *afyim*, Elzon!" said the Serang in a whisper.

"*Afyim!*" echoed Elzon.

"Aye, I t'ink *afyim*," repeated the Serang stubbornly.

"What's *afyim*?" asked Jack, bending down to him.

"You not savvy, you not savvy?"

But Jack did not savvy.

"Kaptan Sahib eat him," said the Serang, "and then he go *nind*, him sleep, you savvy, Elzon? Now you savvy, eh?"

But still Jack did not understand. Then the old Serang reached out his hand and took a little piece of soft bread, which he had been given by one of the *bhandaris*, and breaking off a little bit rolled it into a pill. This he ate and then lay down in his bunk and pretended to be asleep. He even snored. Then he opened his eyes and looked at Jack.

"Now, Elzon, you savvy?"

"I think I savvy, Serang," said Elzon.

*Afjim* was opium.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AFYIM

GOD knows, the God of winds and waters, that there might be calms on the high seas, tropic calms with rain-squalls, warm sweet rain, but who should insure calm in human hearts on the seas or on the land? Let the boys laugh as they would, and let the girls play, but even in their play and laughter there's a hint of tragedy to windward, a white squall breeding or some life cyclone that may wreck them. And here in the *Flying Cloud*, that clipper of the seas, the main-deck might be full of merriment and there might be laughter on deck or below it, and much labour that was not unpleasant, and grinning Malays or Klings and the busy voices of the mates, while elsewhere there was grief, and an unceasing search for nepenthe, for solace, assuagement, ease, and rest. In the echo of the most joyous laughter is a groan. Aye, and in a groan there's satiric laughter, it may be. And there are drugs for groans and for laughter.

There's the great drug — work. There's no such drug in the round world's fields and forests, no such drug grows in jungles or savannahs, or prai-

ries or plains; neither the desert of Sahara, nor that of Gobi, nor the cactus-haunted Mohave can produce another equal to it. It may grow anywhere, and be divine in a cabbage-patch or some lone exile's garden. It grows in fat lands and in poor; in cities and the lonely hills; in palaces or hovels. But even it fails when the man fails. That's the pity of it. Oh, when the man sees that there's no end desired that's desirable, if he come to such exalted misery, what's work then? And there are those who deny even work to their fellows, and sit like ghouls on hoarded gold.

Did any one say there's but one drug, and that Death? Out on the true sayer! Destroy him!

And then there's the poppy and hemlock; there's the expressed juice of powerful plants. There's *afyim*. "He eats *afyim*," said the Serang, with his beady eyes twinkling with anxiety, with sorrow, with pride at his acuteness. He glowed with joy at his own acuteness as a doctor may.

Let us say the Serang spoke the truth; let us say it at once. What need is there to conceal it? The head of the State (for the ship is the State) ate opium and suffered — suffered and took opium. Taking it made him suffer, but suffering urged him to take it and obtain powerful ease. There was something natively wrong with him, some kink in his coil, some flaw in his forging. Once at Calcutta he took it for a very unquiet mind, and henceforward yielded to the poppy's

charm. That flower sings like a siren; who's so deaf as not to hear her flower-like chant?

To speak in all soberness and without poppy-flowers of speech, the poor unhappy devil — Bram's damned nid-nodder — had, indeed, a flaw in him. As old Mac said, it was "something of the brain." He developed for some unknown reason high irritability and morbid touchiness. Accident brought him to the poppy-field: the talk of this man or that: the suggestion of a seller of drugs.

There are some who, having been sober all their lives, take alcohol, and henceforward perish in its flood. There are some who take hemp and might as well hang themselves with its fibres. There are those who taste the poppy and are men no more.

"He eats *afyim*," said the Serang. The men for'ard, jabbering in mixed tongues, affirmed it. But not a soul aft knew, save only the victim, whose will was consumed by it, whose love was devoured by it, whose manliness quailed under it. The poppy became his wife, his mistress, his dreadful adored, his refuge, his heaven, his hell, his life and death. He slept by the poppy, hugged her close, and woke to think how he would kiss her once again. It's the saddest world. There are drugs like evil women and evil women like drugs. But his wife was not evil, and she was lovely and strong. Yet her strength was nothing; it was no more avail than his when he vowed, "This is the last time," as he often did. It was the last time till

the next time. He kept her in a box near his heart.

"I'll throw the box overboard," said the skipper; "after this one dose I'll go on deck and walk to the rail and lean over and drop it all into the sea. Then there'll be no more on board, and I shall be free; oh! and for a long while damned. My wife suspects, aye, and good old Mac stares at me, and young Budd wonders, but if I drop it over and am ill for a time, I shall get well again and be free."

He believed in nothing but opium, but prayed to God, and in his heart he heard a sound that was like laughter — thin, mocking laughter. He took the one last dose, and went on deck, and went to the rail and looked over at the shining phosphorescent sea, and had no thought of drowning the dark witch that enchanted him. 'Twas a genie in a bottle: a gigantic, overshadowing she-genie, mistress of terror and delight, of pain and care.

"To-morrow," said the captain.

Certainly he took opium. The old twinkling-eyed Serang was right.

"I feel quite happy and comfortable," said the eater of *afyim*. "I don't mind the calm, Mr. Mackintosh."

Old Mac stared. What! a seaman did not mind a long calm?

"There's the devil in it all," said old Mac wondering. "Not mind, eh? Well, I'm damned."

## CHAPTER XIX

AFYIM CONTINUED (GOD HELP US !)

YOUNG Ellison had his faults; for instance, he learned to swear with amazing rapidity and brought an original mind to the construction of powerful and striking oaths. He was also bump-tious when he knew a thing, though modest when he didn't. He was also ready enough for a row, and sometimes provoked it by insolence. His morals were not ideal, either, as a matter of theory, though he had some modesty somewhere. But, whatever his faults, he was afraid, when he took thought, of hurting folks, especially when they were hurt already. He saw the captain was a sad man, one badly hurt. And he was the only white man who knew his concealed wound. It was hard, indeed, to know what to do. However, naturally enough, he went to Bram and spoke most casually.

"I say, Bram, do any of the Lascars take opium?" he asked.

"Lord love a duck!" said Bram, with great vulgarity, "how should I know? What's put opium in your head?"

"Oh, I thought Orientals always did," said Jack.  
"I've read so."

"No doubt you've read a lot of lies," grumbled Bram. "Books will be the ruin of you yet."

What a nice creature was this Bramwell! He knew a thing or two, there's not a doubt of it, but it was wonderful that he should know how little there's to be got out of ink and paper. They are rare who understand this.

"Well, what's opium do?" insisted the boy.

"Sends you to sleep," said Bram.

"And then?"

"If you go on with it — it mucks you up altogether," said Bram, lamely enough.

"Does it kill you in the end?"

"You become an awful rotter," said Bram. "Of course, if you take enough, you die, but when used to it, you can take a mighty whack. I've heard of chaps who scoffed it no end."

"I've never known any one who used it," mused Jack.

Bram scorned him.

"Oh, you kid, you baby, you innocent, you ignoramus, what are you prating of? Did you ever know one who took hashish, or sulphuric acid, or have you been to Mars, or the moon? Bless my heart and damn my immortal soul, here you stand piffing that you've never seen this or that, and you might finish truly by saying, 'Oh, Lord, I've

seen nothing but one cursed old hooker in a cursed calm! ' Eh, what? "

So true this was that Jack went off humbly. Still Bram didn't know what he knew, and what responsibility lay on him. Jack felt his very back bow with a huge weight, and he wondered how he could get the Pilgrim's burden off. He loved Bram, but saw how mad a creature it was: how noble and ignoble: how courageous and yet how rash: how wise and yet how foolish. He knew Bram's far-reaching tongue; the man had the discretion of a mad bull and often the delicacy of a buffalo. Heaven alone knew what he would do or say if this opium notion was put into his head. He might let it out, or get half-drunk, and preach on it. As to getting drunk, it was fairly easy in the *Flying Cloud*, for though the skipper did not drink, he supplied liquor in moderation when it was asked for. A man can have a birthday, too, and what skipper's so churlish as to say he shall not present his friends with the whiskey to drink to his abundance of days? Besides, there were ways of getting liquor, of which anon. And, as to the preaching, Bram, the madman, the rare devil, had a notion of preaching, not necessarily of a Sunday, but any fine evening, and he sat on the top of the after end of the deck-house and took a text out of his own experience, and played on it like a drunk fiddler on a fiddle, setting fools and wise laughing. He'd be preaching about

opium, as like as not, and the poor old nid-nodder on the poop.

"What's to be done?" groaned the Greenhorn, who was not so green now, as one sees. He felt a responsibility, and looked round for some strong person to share it.

"There's the mate," said Jack.

Aye, of course, who but old Mac? On Mac fell the weight of things even now. When the skipper's dead or dead drunk, who but the mate is king? When aught goes awry, who but the poor mate suffers? He's every one and everything.

"I'll tell Mr. Mackintosh," said Jack, thereby easing his mind most wonderfully. "But I mustn't give away the Serang. The poor old Serang's afraid of being hauled over the coals, I can see. I'll tell old Mac somehow. He ought to know. If I was mate, I can see I ought to know."

There was something in this boy. He put himself in the place of others at times, and would continue to do it, no doubt, though more rarely as time went on.

That night he tried the mate with his story, or rather, tried to begin it, but the calm was on Mac's mind, and he was surly and gruff and had no use for Jack on the poop. The maddening wind wouldn't blow, and there the *Flying Cloud* stayed, without any inclination for southern latitudes. She might have been a cross on a chart Lat. 9° N.

and Long. 29° W., without being particular to minutes and seconds.

But the next day there was a breath out of the west, and another out of the north, and by and by one from the west again, and the ship got way enough on her to steer by, and she sailed a few miles before she pulled up again and loafed. It was little enough, but it helped, and old Mac cheered up, and at night in the first watch he remembered he'd been rather a beast to the boy. At ten o'clock he called him on the poop and walked with him more cheerfully, and told him a few things, as he always did. This time it was about a fire at sea, and Jack, the young hypocrite, was even more enthusiastic about all the mate had done to put it out, though he had failed, than he otherwise might have been.

"Ah," said Jack intensely. There's great power of flattery in a long-drawn-out "Ah" that's a sigh. So presently, when old Mac had saved himself and a boat-load, Jack got a chance.

"I hope you won't be angry with me, sir," he began; "but I've got something to tell you."

The mate was full of his old days, but he heard. Then he understood.

"Something to tell me? What d'ye mean, Ellison?"

"You won't be cross, sir, even if you think it's not my business?" urged Jack.

"Not be cross? Why, how the devil do I know

whether I'll be cross?" replied old Mac. "But on the whole, my boy, I give you credit for not putting in your oar where it's not wanted. What is it?"

Jack hesitated.

"It's about — about the captain, sir," he said at last.

The mate stopped dead.

"Look here, young fellow," he began, and Jack stood silent.

"You've no call to say anything about him, Ellison," went on old Mac. He gave himself away, and Jack knew it.

"Oh, sir, I wouldn't speak but for something I heard, something you ought to know. I'm sure you ought to know it," said the boy earnestly, with tears in his voice. He liked old Mac so much, thought him such a man!

"Well, what is it?" asked Mackintosh shortly. "Is this any fools' talk from the steerage, or the second cabin? There are fools enough on board."

"It's nothing from them, sir; it's what the men say," said Jack.

The mate stopped short again.

"The men for'ard, they?"

"Yes, sir, some of them for'ard, some of the Khalasis," said the boy.

"Let's hear it," said Mackintosh drily.

"Do you know what *afyim* means, sir?" asked Jack in a low voice.

"Do I know what *afyim* means, do I —"

Then he stopped dead and turned and walked away to where the signal-locker stood. He brought his hand down on it heavily.

"My God," said old Mac. "And I never thought of it!"

There's knowledge dead as a heap of powder grains, and one hints a spark and the powder's lit and goes heavenward. He was no fool of a man, but quick enough, and at the word, he knew.

"Do I know what *afyim* means? Yes, Ellison, I know," he said in a strained voice.

"It's opium, sir," said Jack in a whisper.

"Yes, my lad, opium," echoed the mate.

"They say, lad —"

"They say for'ard the captain takes it, sir. It's no business of mine, I know, but I did think you should be told what's said, sir, and if I'm wrong —"

The mate put his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"You're not wrong, boy; I ought to know, of course. Have you spoken to any one else, to that Bram Gray, for instance?"

"Not a word, sir, not a word."

The mate's hand gripped him tight.

"I can trust you not to?"

"Oh, sir!" said Jack.

"That's my good young fellow," said the mate. Then he added loyally, "There's nothing in it."

Jack was silent.

"There's nothing in it. 'Tis a slander."

And Jack still held his peace.

"Good God! boy, it's true," said the mate.

"For years it's been true, and now I know it. Poor Jane Dundas, she's a sweet and beautiful woman. Does she know, I wonder, does she know?"

He asked the quiet heavens that, but got no answer. What should the quiet gods answer to the anguished spirits who cry out to them?

But presently there came a light air from the north, and the mate at the break of the poop called out in a steady voice:

"*Yahum parwan*, square the yards!"

The talkers of *afyim* turned out and squared them.

"He's got his squared for the port of hell," said the mate.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE TWO MATES

Now Jack knew himself better and knew the mate better, and he went away sorrowful but proud. He shared a secret with old Mackintosh and old Mac trusted him. It was a sad thing, but that he knew what others aft did not know gave him weight and strength in his own mind, and now he learned the tragedy of life, and saw how little were the tragedies he knew, those that were his own. The poor skipper had his burden, and here Jack's light burden was halved. And being halved it seemed at last nothing, for, indeed, he did not wholly understand the tragedy of opium and its woes and delights. Yet he was sobered a little, and some of the others knew it.

"Here's our Jacky boy quite grown up," said Bram, for instance. For Bram had keen enough eyes. So some swore Jack must be in love, perhaps with Finnegan's sister, the pretty one of the two, and they threw out hints that he met her at midnight on the deck, and Jack said nothing, being pleased to let them think so. There wasn't one of them who wouldn't have liked to do that. Yet Irish girls are not, as a rule, to be met on deck at

midnight. That's a truth, if there's no truth elsewhere.

But if Jack's burden was light (and, after all, what had he to do with the poor skipper?), old Mac's was heavy enough, and he knew not what to do. It seemed as if he should tell Jane Dundas, but he feared to do it. It's not easy to make grief heavier than it is already, and he knew she was grieved and sorrowful. Her beautiful colour failed day by day, though she said it was due to the tropic heat, and she sat about at work saying little or nothing, she who at one time was quite full of merry words, and strong withal.

"I can't tell her," said old Mac. "I must tell Budd."

On his shoulders and on Budd's lay the burden of the ship, and though Budd was a simple enough creature, with more muscles than mind, he was a man of a good sort, and as brave as a sea-lion.

So two midnights after Jack had spoken, Mac spoke to Budd when he relieved him.

"I've got something to say to you, Mr. Budd," said the mate as they stood by the binnacle after talking wind and weather, and their hopes of a good Southeast Trade.

"Yes, sir," replied the second mate, with a suppressed yawn; "why, yes, sir; what is it?"

"Come for'ard a bit," said the mate. The quartermaster, or *Sukkanee*, at the wheel might

catch his words. They walked for'ard of the mizzenmast and old Mac leaned against the rail.

"Why, what is it, sir?" asked Budd, again yawning and stretching himself towards the shining stars.

"'Tis a sad thing, Mr. Budd, and heavy on my mind, but you should know it seems to me, and I'm much grieved in my mind, and there are times one needs advice and help, and if I can't get it from you, Mr. Budd, where shall I go for it now?"

It was a strange preamble, and Budd yawned no more, and thought no more of the Southeast Trade.

"Why, sir, you're gloomy to-night, a bit off, sir; in the doldrums, so to speak. But if I can do aught! I'm a bit of a fool, I know, though I hope I know my duty —"

"You do, you do, Mr. Budd," said the mate.

"Thank you, sir; I try my best, and with you over me, a man I've a respect for, seeing that I never sailed with a better seaman, and nowadays good seamen grow rarer, as it seems to me — I'll do my best, and can say no fairer."

"You cannot, Mr. Budd," said the mate heartily, but with a set kind of sadness, "and if every man did his duty I'll not say I'd be exceeding mine this night. But there's a dark lookout for us, Mr. Budd, and I'm very heavy in my heart for the captain."

"I thought you had it in your mind to speak of

him, sir," said Budd. "I've been more grieved for him and Mrs. Dundas these last days of calm than I could say."

"She grows pale, Mr. Budd."

"Aye, pale, sir."

"I heard something to the point the other night. That lad Ellison —"

"Oh, young Ellison!"

"A very quick lad, Mr. Budd."

"A monkey aloft, sir, a very monkey. And a passenger, too!"

"He's very friendly with the men for'ard, and has even learned a little of their lingo, Mr. Budd."

"It's hard learning, sir."

"And he overheard 'em talking, Mr. Budd, and, like a good lad, told me."

"Why, sir, what were the scoundrels saying?"

"They said, Mr. Budd, that the captain took opium."

"Oh, sir!"

"My God, that's what the boy told me! And — and I know it's true, Mr. Budd. With half an eye I can see it. Here I've been sailing round the rock of truth in a fog, and this boy comes along with a lighted word, so to put it, and I see we're on the rocks, Mr. Budd. 'Tis cross-bearings that give us our position. Do you believe it?"

"I'll believe it if you do, sir. But does it explain things? Yes, it does. I can see it, sir."

"'Tis nothing for us. It's his wife I think of.

We can sail this old hooker, to hell and back again, if need be, but there's his wife."

"Oh, she's a sad woman, sir!"

"And when I first knew her, who so bright and strong? The merriest woman, Mr. Budd, and capable and understanding, knowing a great deal as you know. By the Lord, she could put this ship about, Mr. Budd, and knows arithmetic, and how she manages the stores and the steward is an eye-opener. The grief of it all is that she loves the man, and there's her boy too!"

"A nice boy, sir."

"And his father's on a lee shore! What shall I do about it? That's the point. Shall I tell her, or go straight to him, and say, 'Is this true?' It's a hard point, for the captain is the captain, and I'm only the mate. I know my place, none better. What do you advise, Mr. Budd? I'm in a clinch, jammed betwixt two winds as the fore and aft sailor was when he found himself in a brig hove to."

He laughed mournfully.

"But what do you advise, Mr. Budd?"

"I'll sleep on it, sir; I'm clearer on things after a sleep. That's my nature, and the nature of most, as I've observed. It's a hard question, for, as you say, a captain's a captain, and I'm afraid of Mrs. Dundas, I own it."

"You sleep upon it, Mr. Budd, and in the

morning advise me. I'm out to the clinch, to the bitter end. But I try to trust in God."

"I sailed with an old skipper, sir, who said 'it was better to trust in the lead,' if you don't think that's irreligious, sir."

"I'll not say it's irreligious, Mr. Budd, for the lead's a gift from heaven; but it seems flippant talk for an old man."

"He was a good seaman, sir."

"Well, turn in, Mr. Budd, and think of this."

"Good night, sir."

And the old mate paced the windless deck alone.

"I'm all becalmed," he said; "I'm all becalmed, and here's a squall coming. There's not enough wind for me to get my head round, as it were. I'll be all aback; why, God Almighty, it's a very odd world! There's that Bram Gray up to his fun last Saturday night, sitting on the deck-house and preaching out of an old play, so he said, that was called, 'It's a Mad World, My Masters.' I dare swear the queer fellow invented it himself, but he went on most comically, so that the folks laughed, and Mr. Budd and I had to crack out or burst. He said, wisely enough, that the world was sane, but that only wise folks were mad. I swear he read it; perhaps there's such a play. Here's the captain twice the man I am, with a marvellous headpiece, loaded to the mark with great ideas of astronomy and mathematics! A lunar used to be

a joke to him; he'd eat and work one. And now here a damned drug's got him, worse than alcohol. Why, what's being drunk? I've been drunk as David's sow scores of times. I've drunk she-oak, and common beer, and cashasha, white rum and red, and brandy and gin, my word! and good Scotch till I remembered old Scotland no more. Bless my heart, being drunk's nothing : I've been tanked up and blind in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; I've tasted every mortal sort of lush in the four continents and Australia to boot. I'll drink with any man, with a fair allowance of water and a biscuit — but these drugs! They're damnable! There's no drink and have it over with them; it's cut and come again. There's no beastly sickness about 'em, that sickens a good man of more. I've been drunk as a fiddler's trull, and swore I'd live for liquor as I sang, but in the morning, and for months after, I could not look at a labelled bottle. But these drugs! Yes, it's a mad world, and there's no wind in it either, and here's the old *Flying Cloud* lying like a log in the high seas betwixt there and nowhere! Oh, give me wind! I could whistle for it. Oh, these drugs!"

And still he paced the windless deck.

At four o'clock, when it was once more the second mate's turn as officer of the watch, the old man waited for him eagerly.

"Maybe he'll have a thought; who knows? I don't say he's a man of intellect, far from it, but

he's a sound man, and just as likely to say the right thing as a wise one," said old Mac, wisely.

So when Budd came on the poop he spoke straight.

"You've slept on it, Mr. Budd."

"Aye, sir."

"And are you clear in your mind?"

"Pretty clear, sir, though not certain. Still, I know what I'd do if I were you."

"That's the way to put it, Mr. Budd, so speak out."

"Well, sir, it's this way," said Budd slowly.

"I've heard it's vain work speaking to a man in such a position. They take no notice except to hate you for your knowledge of their weakness."

"Aye, that's like enough, that's sound sense, that's what I expected of you," said the mate.

"Therefore I'd say nothing to the captain, sir. But I think, sir, it would be wise to speak to Mrs. Dundas —"

"It'll be hard, Mr. Budd."

"Aye, sir, I know it; and, therefore, sir, I was about to suggest that if you'd rather not do it, I would myself if you approved, for who am I? And you being mate, it would be unpleasant if she were angry, as a woman might be, and she being a woman of temper and strength. So if you like, sir, I'll speak."

"You're a good man, Mr. Budd, and it's what

I expected of you. I'm pleased I wasn't wrong, though I never am in my judgment of men. But don't think I'll let you nip in where my place is. I'll speak to her myself, and I thank you all the same. It's a pleasure to have such a capable man with me.

And who so happy in his lonely watch that morning as Budd?

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE WIFE

THEREAFTER there came a day of cloud, which bred heavy rain-squalls, and also wind, making it a long day pushing the *Flying Cloud* to the south'ard. In the doldrums no good seaman loses a breath of the wind, for who knows but that he may thrust his ship forward and catch a hearty lasting breeze. There's nothing in the wide earth or the open seas so maddening as for a lazy, windless ship to see another draw, in the lottery of the heavens, a far-off breeze that moves her down over the round of the world, and perhaps puts her on the way for her far-off port.

It was, therefore, a day of labour and sore hands, for with the heavy squalls the braces were wet, and in the wet men's hands chafe. But after the sleep of the *Flying Cloud* to be moving was good; it was as pleasant as it is to wake up in a fine windy morning when one is young, knowing that there's a day in front of you. Sore hands or sound pulled well enough, when it was "Brace up" or "Square away," and the passengers were happier and lent a hand at the work. White and black tailed on

the braces, and made everything crack again, and young Jack was as busy as the devil himself. The captain came on deck for an hour or two, but sat silent on a hen-coop. He looked very white, so the mate said. And old Mac pitied him, but pitied his wife more, knowing what he had to tell her when the time came. He was glad to be busy, so as not to tell her yet. Indeed, he did not tell her that day at all, but spent his spare time thinking. Or so he said, but, indeed, he feared her.

That evening, in the second dog-watch, when there was a full-sailed moon in the heavens almost in the zenith, there was a strange scene on deck. The day had been as hot as the "hob of hell," as seamen say, or as the hinges of the gate of hell (seamen are pessimistic and think the gates busy), and men and women had suffered. There's such a quality in tropic winds, when they are wet; they slacken men's fibres and debauch their strength, more especially when there is no work or when the work is done. They sweat and are uneasy and growl; there are quarrels in hot damp air, and ugly words. When a calm comes between two rain-squalls and the air is heavy there's no pleasure in breathing. And free breath is the first great pleasure of life, next after the free course of the red blood in easy veins. In such times it's good to breathe, good to feel the sting of water on one, and Bram set some of the others bathing, not in the sea, but by means of the very heavens themselves.

There came a heavy rushing squall which ate up the overhead moon and made night black as native darkness, and he ran on deck in shirt and trousers, and invited Jack and Watson and Scott and the rest to come after him.

"Come up, quarrellers," said Bram dancing. "Oh, it's fine; here's rain, here's a shower-bath, boys."

The air below was stifling, and they streamed on deck, and laughed. There were no women about, so they went for'ard on the fore-hatch and stripped, and all the time the flood-gates of the sky were open. The rain danced mad and white on a whitened level sea; the decks swam; the full scuppers spouted; they could hardly carry off the flood. It was a solid straight rain, heavy, warm, and yet stinging. The boys danced in it, their white skins shone, and the Lascars, who did not love water over much, came to the foc'sle doors and chattered and grinned at the young white men who were white indeed.

"Clothes are hateful," said Bram.

"It's fine being naked," cried Jack.

Even the pawnbroker danced and laughed in the rain, and asked the others if they thought he was fatter. He was anxious about his fat. Scott, who loved liquor better than water, said this was a proper sort of bath, and the singing pastry-cook squatted in the scuppers and wallowed in them joyously. Only two of the crew joined them, one

Lalu, a Malay quartermaster, a fine, tall, slim fellow, taller than most of his countrymen, and Mahomet, the Sidi boy, the gigantic negro. He shouted and yelled like a baby in a warm bath, and looked splendid as a statue that lived. When it was warm he was a good man, stupid as a cow, but brave and kindly: a good sort of slave indeed. The slim whites looked at Mahomet and admired him, and he grinned and showed a mouth of fine ivory inside of his lips. Who could think that in the cold he was a cry-baby and a shirker?

Seeing the boys have their good time made old Mac wish to join them, but alas! he was an officer and had to be dignified. He and Budd stayed and sweated on the poop in oilskins, envying them.

"Happy boys," said old Mac.

"Happy as mud-larks," said Budd. "There's no bath better than such rain."

It was a benediction; it took the savageness out of them. They went below and dried and chaffed each other and played cards and had a good time, these clean and blessed youths. Even the doomed pawnbroker forgot death. The rest had never thought of it. Death, boys, is what others die of! But Mac thought of death for others. There was too much strength in him for him to dream of it for himself.

The squall passed and the round moon showed again between two black clouds which dissolved like night under her powerful and enchanting rays.

She stood in a solemn splendour and cast heavy shadows on the drying decks. The flaccid hanging sails were touched by her in their folds; in the shadow they were black. The under sides of the yards were dark, but silver shone on their polished jackstays. There was a spacious air about things and a quiet strength. The *Flying Cloud* seemed larger as the moon declined westward, for her sea shadows, which were sharp, appeared to belong to her. They took on an apparent solidity, until the eye grew to them and found them translucent. Then, indeed, she seemed like a carved monument set on polished silver until she swung and the moon caught her sails full, making them all silver.

"There's great beauty in a ship," said old material Mac.

"We've been forty-five days since we cast off from the tug, sir," said Budd.

"Aye, 'tis a drifting match," owned Mac, with a sigh. There were men who drifted. Mrs. Dundas came on deck.

"I'll speak to her now, Mr. Budd," said old Mac desperately. Budd sighed a little too, but drifted below and lighted a pipe and thought of his Mary.

"There's something I had it in my mind to speak to you about, Mrs. Dundas," said the mate respectfully. He took off his cap, wiped his forehead with a bandanna, as big as a small skysail, and then stood bareheaded.

"Yes, Mr. Mackintosh," said Jane Dundas.

"How's the captain to-day, ma'am?"

"Not well, not well at all."

"What's wrong with him, ma'am?"

"I do not know."

There was a touch of sullenness in her voice.

"'Tis surely an illness, ma'am?"

"Is it about him you wished to speak?"

"Why, ma'am, if you don't think it exceeding my duty, I own freely it was about the captain."

She stared at him, but his face was in the shadow. The moon's light was on his silvered hair.

"You are the mate, Mr. Mackintosh, and he's ill."

It was owing that the old mate was truly in command.

"That's so, ma'am."

But still he did not speak.

"You've something to say?" she asked almost angrily.

"Aye, madam, truly; but what's wrong with the captain? Do you know? Can you put a name to it?"

"He's a changed man," she said.

"Aye, truly I remember him different. He would laugh, ma'am; he was lively as a boy. He'd run aloft, aye, that would he! And now —"

He turned away.

"You're saying nothing, Mr. Mackintosh, but

I'm sure you've something to say. Do you know what's wrong? Do you think he's dying? "

She spoke in a sudden agony.

"No, ma'am, no! I think no such thing. There's great changes possible in a man without it's being a question of death. But there's talk —"

"Oh, talk of what? "

"Others see the change, ma'am, the same as you and I."

"And what do they say? Who are they? "

"The talk came from for'ard, ma'am. Some of the men were overheard."

To have the men for'ard speak of her husband!

"How dare they — what do they say? Tell me! "

"Oh, ma'am, 'tis a hard task to say, and I'm loath to hurt you, and as for him, why, I've a great respect for him, and his abilities are known where seamen get together, and I've sailed with him three voyages and two with you."

"You're saying nothing, Mr. Mackintosh. What have you to say? "

"He doesn't drink, ma'am? "

"You know he doesn't — oh, never, never! "

"Then does he take aught, anything he should not? "

"They say so? Do they say so? "

"There's a word goes about, ma'am — "

"What word? "

" 'Tis opium, ma'am."

" It's a lie, a lie! " she panted.

" I'm most heartily glad — "

" It's a — oh, if it were true! "

She whispered it, but old Mac heard her, and turned away. She came up to him and touched his arm imploringly.

" Let's be open, Mr. Mackintosh, for here's my husband strangely sick, a changed man, indeed. He used to be as bright as the sun, aye, and so merry. And now here you come to me and say what others say, and I — I know nothing, but I fear everything. Let's be open; you're my friend and his (oh, what does Mr. Budd think?), and he always spoke so highly of you. Do you believe it? "

The man turned to her again. He seemed older, but more benignant and very quiet.

" Why, ma'am, there's something. That's the truth. A ship don't alter her sailing of herself; a ship's a ship, and has her ways, and can run well or can beat to windward; she's weatherly or a loo'ardly tub; she's sea-kindly or a diver, and there's this or that deviation to her compasses, and these things remain in her nature till she's altered, and men are the same. And now I'll tell you how I learned this, how it came to me. There's that boy Ellison, in the steerage, a good boy enough, though given to swearing too flashly for so young a boy, and he's friendly with the crew, and has in a way learned some of their lingo, being

bright at languages. He says he knows some Latin and Greek, and maybe it's true; but anyhow, there it is that he knows a little of the Lascar talk and sits with them and soaks in things amazingly, for he's told me tricks of theirs I never knew. And it appears that one of them said something of *afyim*, which is their word for opium, and then something of the captain, or Kaptan Sahib, as they say, and some laughed. And thereupon this boy speaks to one of them and learns 'tis said for'ard that the captain eats it, and 'tis more likely they should know than we, for no doubt some of them take it, and have known about it. And he comes to me quietly, like a good lad, and says, 'Mr. Mackintosh, you ought to know this.' But more I don't know, ma'am, and in telling you I, too, have done what I think I ought to do, though 'tis hard to hurt you."

There were tears in his eyes as he ended. And she said:

"I'll be open. You're my friend. I know there's something wrong, but what till now I couldn't tell. But I know he's so changed, and it's like enough this is true. He has a locked drawer that he keeps the key of, and he has a little box always on him, and at times I see him take something from it, and when I asked him what it was he said it was tobacco, though indeed I doubted it. Oh, what shall I do! Must I speak to him?"

Old Mac stood silent.

"Must I speak?" she urged.

"Oh, ma'am," said the mate.

"What is it? what is it?"

The old mate groaned.

"Why, ma'am, you may speak, and 'twill be no good, no good at all. Little it is I know of it, but when a man's given his heart to it —"

"Oh, given his heart!" she groaned.

"Ah, when he's done that, there's no gift in man or woman to persuade him from it. It's a most powerful drawing thing, a very enticing, remorseless thing, ma'am, and tears even will be vain. Now I remember in China hearing that one man said 'twas his wife and his children, and his hearth and his home, and all his friends and his gods too. Oh, 'twill be vain, I fear."

"But I'm his wife —"

"Aye, his wife; and there's his boy."

"He loves him."

"As he used to do?"

She lifted up a terrible face to the sky.

"He's not asked for him these weeks past!"

The mate spoke low.

"And you —"

"I might be a thing of wood now," she moaned.

"He has such a withdrawn eye, so inward-looking, so chill. But I'll speak to him. There are times he looks sad, so sad, I could scream, but I dare not. Perhaps if I speak —"

"Yes, speak, ma'am!"

"I'll try. This weather, too. He used to love the hard weather; he'd be lively then."

"He said he didn't mind the calm. Didn't mind it! Well, there will be a change. You'll speak to him?"

"Yes, I'll speak. Good night. Thank you; you are our friend, but it's dreadful."

An hour later the mate spoke to Budd.

"I told her."

"And she —"

"I'd ha' rather lost my right hand, Mr. Budd. She's a big, loving woman, strong as life itself, but her grief —"

He found no words for it.

She could not even find tears for it.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE CAPTAIN

HE was monstrously thin and pale, for the opium-eater eats little, but he was still warm — still alive, and by no means the sad thing his wife believed. She mistook his morbid quietude for remorseful passion. Yet there was no urgency within him for cure, but rather for more of the drug. As the progress of the *Flying Cloud* had been a drifting match, so was his progress, not swift, but sure enough in spite of calms, when he took no more to-day than he had taken yesterday. By some chance, such as rules man, she had discovered the truth too late, or so it seemed. A little while ago there might have been a chance to save him, when he had still struggled. Now he struggled no more.

He was comfortable, deadly comfortable; that's the word for him. *Afyim* is kind; it wraps the soul about, shelters it, lulls it, builds a high wall about the sleeping spirit. It gave him bright dreams, dreams of strange lights, of double suns, of things that glittered and shone; he saw sparkling jewels and silver and polished gold. This is the gift of opium to some before it plunges them into

the pit. There were times when he felt supremely happy and blessed with such an amazing contentment. Then the troubled faces of the world were nothing to him, nor were its labours or its schemes anything, or its perpetual vain duties. He could smile at trouble and labour. There are quiet soft smiles in the smelling drug.

These were his thoughts when he saw her troubled face or noted anxiety in strong old Mac.

"I'm all right; what's the matter, eh? Why, it used to be a worrying world; I took things hard and badly. Now I'm steady enough and quiet, quiet as a trade-wind. A shipmaster's work is a worry; that a woman can't understand, or a mate either till he's there. Now I get along much easier. My brain used to worry me; I used to think I was going mad. Now I can sit and laugh at things that drove me crazy. It's not the opium itself, but it helps. There's philosophy in this little box. I used to see poppies in a field, and never thought they were so wise."

The weight of his authority, the ship and her people, the sea and wind and sky were all a dream to him. The man nested in the eternal calm of heaven like a halcyon. He was in such a profound peace when his wife came to him.

"Will!"

"Aye, Jane."

Her strained quiet voice jarred him. There are

drugs that make a whisper sound like thunder echoing through vaults, and there are others whose quality is to make nigh thunder's self no more than a sigh of the wind. For opium a voice is still a voice, but the hearer is a little deaf, and if he is peaceful, who should worry him with words? He looked at her with aloof attention, for this day he had taken a great deal of the drug. She came to him and knelt down, and laid her head upon his knee.

"Well, Janel"

It was the beauty of the drug that she did not worry him, even though she broke his peace.

"I've something to say, Will; I must speak."

He nodded gravely and looked down on her with those blue eyes of his which seemed so changed. The black pupil which had once been very lustrous was a mere pin-point of dark shadow.

"Yes, Jane, what is it? I was just thinking then —"

It was saying she disturbed him.

"I must speak," she said almost harshly. "I can't stand it any more. What's wrong with you?"

She had come to him meaning to be gentle, but his gentleness outraged her and made her angry. She rose from her knees and stood by him with her bosom heaving.

"What's wrong, Will? There's something very wrong. We used to be so much to each other — a little time ago only. You're all changed, all for

sleep and rest — what is it? It makes me mad, and you used to be a man. Why, what's got you? are you ill? "

It was wild foolish talk and he knew it, especially as there was nothing wrong with him. He smiled wearily, as though he listened on sufferance.

"You say nothing," she cried. "You've not spoken to me of your own accord this week. You've not asked for your boy. The very ship's nothing to you, the ship you used to love. Oh, Will, my heart's breaking! "

Her grief thrust her anger away; she went down on her knees again.

"Why, what a foolish woman it is," said her husband; "there's nothing wrong with me, Jane. I'm comfortable enough if you'll only be quiet. What's wrong with you? "

She could have screamed.

"You're comfortable! What makes you comfortable, if that's the word? "

She shook his heavy arm, but her extreme anguish was like the sound of a far-off wind. Yet he knew what was in the little box and what he had hidden elsewhere, and he smiled secretly.

"Comfortable, oh, my God! and they say things of you in the ship; the very Lascars say things! " she cried.

Her persistence woke him up a little; he became for the moment more normal.

"The Lascars! What do they say? What do

you mean by coming here and carrying to me what the Lascars say? "

He could then be angry! He even spoke with bitterness, but she knew that this touched him and his authority nearly. He clung to that more than to her and his child! She cried out:

" They say they know why you do nothing and sleep always! That's pleasant talk for you! And there's a word in their mouths — "

She stopped and Dundas rose from his chair. He laid hold of the edge of the bunk and stared out in front of him.

" Damn them! what's their word, eh? A pretty thing to have my wife carrying what they say! What do they say? "

She flung the thing at him

" Opium! "

It staggered him to hear the word, that he had whispered, cried aloud. This was his secret, and it was in the winds. How did they know? And his wife, too! He was not so comfortable now; his deep peace was broken. But he could lie.

" It's a lie, Jane, a slander! "

A wild hope of his truth was in her, but then she saw his secret alarm. Unconsciously he had moved his hand to the pocket in which he carried the little box.

" Oh, Will, what's in the box you carry? "

He fiddled in his pocket.

" That's tobacco," he answered.

"Show it me!"

"Oh, I'm a liar, am I?" said Dundas angrily. He fumbled at his box, got it open, took a loose piece and carried it secretly to his mouth. "I'm a liar, am I?"

"I want to believe you and can't," she groaned. "Show it me."

"I won't," he said; "you've got to believe me. I'm not well, not well, that's it. Can't you understand? Mackintosh is too easy with those Lascars. If I were well I'd work 'em up! That's what they want. Now, if you've done, I'll take a rest, a rest!"

He mumbled his later words, and, as it were, half-ate them.

"I'll go," she said, with infinite bitterness, "but I don't believe it. There's a drug in a little box that's your wife and child and hearth and home!"

She left him and went into the big cabin and found her boy playing there with the young steward, who was his nurse. But Dundas never thought of the boy. He stood in his cabin, smiling, but uneasy, wondering who had found out what she said.

"I can give it up if I like," he said, half-nodding, for he had taken more even than his increasing dose that day. "I know I could. How did those Khalasis find out? Old Mac's too mild with them. I know old Mackintosh has been talking with Jane about me."

He sat down in his chair.

"I remember old Mac talking with me about opium two years ago. He asked me something about the different kinds. We were in Calcutta river then. He never suspected me, I know, but he said a man couldn't give it up. I said some poor devils couldn't, but that a *man* could. I can give it up. If I've a mind to. But it's a comfortable thing: makes me better than merry. Some love liquor; I never cared for it. And tobacco I've not smoked since I took it. I used to smoke too much. Now I don't; that's good."

He grew a little easier in his mind. But before he lay down he locked away the little box and hid the key.

"I've got two cakes there, aye, and a ball," he said exultantly. "That'll do me a long time. It's bad to take too much, but I've always kept clear of that. I always had a strong will, a devil of a strong will. She thinks I'll go to the devil with it. She's a silly woman. I'll tell her the truth some day, and say I'll give it up. That will please her. I've half a mind to give it up now. There now, old girl, what d'ye think of that? Look here, I'll take no more after we cross the Line. That's the way, and I'll have all I want now; there's days till we cross. And if I don't give it up, may I stick to it for ever! I'll show 'em I'm all right; I'll show Mac and these stinking Lascars

that I'm a man. It's a fine comfortable thing, but I can give it up! Of course I can!"

He crawled into his bunk and lay as quiet as a closed poppy at night-time.

He was a man! It's a strange and awful thing to be at times. And now there was a little breeze out of the southeast, like a forerunner of the Southeast Trade, which often comes trespassing in northern latitudes. The trade, if it came, would soon take him across the Line.

"Look here, I'll take no more after we cross the Line. And if I don't —"

He was a man, he said, and slept.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ACROSS THE LINE

NEXT day the sun went out of sight in a clouded sky, just as the sun had gone out wholly for Jane Dundas and old Mac, and there were faint variable airs, mostly from the southeast. But they held no quality of steadiness in them; they had no strong quality of the trades. Yet the *Flying Cloud*, with all her kites abroad, made a little headway on the port tack, and about noon there came a barque in sight right ahead of them. Bar one half-swamped brigantine in the Bay, and a distant white sail or two about latitude  $10^{\circ}$  N., this was the first, and great eagerness came over all hands to speak her. It was the first break in their mighty sea loneliness. Every soul came on deck, and the ship buzzed as it does when she comes into port and there's a new land to be seen and tasted.

"We'll speak her for sure," said Bram, and young Ellison was in a devil of an excited state.

"That'll be fine, eh?"

Oh, but it was great! Here they were in mid-ocean, and for nearly two months there had been scarcely a sign of any other world than the ship herself. The *Flying Cloud* had been the world;

there was no other as she drifted like a lost planet in the ether. Now over the round rim of the sea and amid the hot gloom there came another white-sailed world. The port rail was full of the people, and on the foc'sle head were many of the busy crew, now for the moment idling, since the mates were busy and the Serang himself as eager as the rest to hear of other creatures.

In the light variable airs it took time for these two sea-creatures to near each other; but when they were no more than a mile apart, heading so as to pass each other on the port side, the new ship seemed big.

"Oh, she's a barque," said Jack. Now he knew a ship from a barque, a barque from a barquentine, a brig from a brigantine. He could tell the others why she was a barque and thought they were very stupid not to know.

And then the skipper came on deck. Jack saw him and wondered if what the old Serang said was true. And if it were true, as Mackintosh seemed to think, what did it signify? He seemed the same as another man, quieter perhaps, but still the same. The quartermaster hoisted the Merchant Jack, and in a moment the stranger hoisted hers.

"She's English, too," said Bram.

There was more motion in the sea than there had been for long weeks: a dull heave that suggested strong winds somewhere. The sky was

leadens, not a break in it, and the air was very close and warm.

"What a long time she takes," said Jack impatiently as he mopped his forehead. He clambered on the rail and into the main-rigging alongside of Bram Gray.

"Wonder if she has any news!" said Bram.

"News of what?"

"Oh, of anything. There might be some, a war! Who knows?"

There had been time for the world to sink, for that matter. In a long passage there's time for anything.

"There's the 'old man,'" said Bram. "'Tisn't often he comes on deck. But this brings him."

"To be sure," said Jack eagerly. "Will he call out to her?"

"Aye, with a speaking-trumpet."

There's something fine about the notion of a speaking-trumpet. And Jack had never heard one. He saw how unimaginably lonely the sea was in all its great spaces.

"A speaking-trumpet!"

The stranger to windward came up steadily and was now broad on the port bow and within two cables' lengths. Jack looked and saw little men upon the ship and saw one on the poop with something in his hand. A faint far bellow came across the waves as the vessels closed.

"What ship's that?"

The *Flying Cloud's* skipper answered tremendously. His voice seemed big.

"The *Flying Cloud*, of Liverpool. What ship's that?"

The faint answer came that she was the *Ocean Queen*, of London.

"Where did you lose the Southeast Trades?" bellowed the captain.

"Haven't lost 'em yet," came the far faint answer. And the distant voice added: "They're mighty strong a bit further south."

They were sixty days from Coquimbo, and the *Flying Cloud* said she was forty-five from Liverpool, and would the *Ocean Queen* be so kind as to report her. There were no Northeast Trades, said the *Flying Cloud*, or what there was of them couldn't be called anything decent. And so the two vessels passed each other, and went on their separate ways, with a parting bellow and a distant whisper of salute, and the dim ocean took each of them.

"Well, perhaps we'll get a breeze now, if what they say is right, sir," said old Mackintosh.

"It's frightful the time we've been," said the skipper, as he laid the trumpet on the signal-locker.

"We're slow as a hearse, Mr. Mackintosh."

"As a hearse, sir," said the mate. "I hope you're better this morning, sir."

"I'm all right," said Dundas, as he went below. He passed his wife without speaking. She had

showed her boy the other vessel, and the little lad was half-inclined to cry for it, as some will for the moon.

"A pretty ship; I want it," said the boy urgently.

"You've got this one," said his mother. "And I've got you."

It seemed to her that she had little else. Her heart was full of tears.

"This is papa's ship; I want one of my own," said the child, stamping. He was a strong and handsome boy, and could talk the Lascar's bastard Hindostanee and swear like any seaman. It was pretty to hear him swear; he did it in such profound innocence and with such amazing gusto.

"I want a damn ship of my own, mummy," he roared piteously.

"Oh, hush, Billy, hush," she said. "You shall have one some day."

She prayed that he should not have one. The sea was a deadly business. It might make many men, but one it had destroyed.

"I want mine now," said Billy. "I'd like that one."

"No, dear, you can't have that one. Come now, and play with Said."

"Said is a sooar," said Billy, "he's a pig. I want a ship, and not a sooar like Said."

But presently he played with Said, and having

got the bight of the mizzen-royal-clew-line off the pin and round Said's neck, he proceeded to strangle him very energetically.

"I'll kill the sooar," said Billy joyously.

By nightfall there was no reason to doubt that the *Ocean Queen* had spoken the truth when she declared she had never lost the Southeast Trade-wind. It was a fine breeze long before midnight, and the rising swell told of its strength. In the first watch the *Flying Cloud* reeled off seven knots an hour by the log, which was more than she had done since she had got clear of the Bay of Biscay. Though the wind was hot enough and tropical in its very taste, still it was fresher than of old, and the rising regular sea spoke of steady breezes and strong ones. Cheerfulness came on board again with the very feeling of the ship's motion, and men knew by their present gladness how much the calm had tried them. Even old Mackintosh, who was troubled so by the state of the skipper smiled to himself and to Budd.

"This is something like, Mr. Budd."

"Aye, sir, let her scoot! It's a pleasant change. There's more where this comes from. One does get a good Southeast Trade at times."

"We'll get one now, a regular breeze! I can smell it. There's every sign of it. It will make up for our long drift. It was a drift now, wasn't it, Mr. Budd?"

"To be sure, sir. Damn calms, I say! I'd

sooner see things go in a real howler than watch a ship loaf and lollop. I would much rather."

The mate rubbed his hands.

"I'm not saying I don't agree with you, Mr. Budd; but if the captain gets one of his hard-weather stunsail fits on when we've rounded the Cape, you'll see splinters."

"The captain seems a little better, sir."

"I hope so," said Mackintosh. "Calms try any man."

"But he said he didn't mind 'em, sir."

"So I might say, but I shouldn't mean it, Mr. Budd. No man *can* like calms. It's out of nature. But she does breeze up! This is something like. We'll be across the Line before we know it."

And down in the steerage and the second cabin they were all as merry as liquor could make them. For they had liquor and plenty of it, and never paid for it either. There was only a board or two between them and the lazarette where it was stored, and Bram, who was a devil of ingenuity, had borrowed a hammer and cold steel chisel and cut the heads off the nails that held the boards. While he was at this, the whole gang, including Jack, sang loud choruses. Then they sprang the boards back and sent in the pastry-cook, who was the smallest and could get through easiest, to hunt for a case of whiskey.

"Trust Cooky for finding it," said Bram. "He's

been smelling it through the cracks this month past."

They had a joyful time of it, but were moderate.

"It won't do for all of us to get as drunk as boiled owls," said Bram, "or they'll smell a rat."

He and Watson kept the liquor in charge and doled it out. Nevertheless, by some means, or by reason of his weak head, the pawnbroker got as uproarious as if he had lent money on paste and found it diamonds, and the result was that Watson, who was as strong as a bull, picked him up, slammed him into his bunk, and frightened him into soberness again.

"Nevertheless, we'll be over the Line in the morning, or some time to-morrow, anyhow," said Bram, "if we can't go over the Line now. Boys, I tell you, the old girl is moving! She's just slapping into it. What cheer, let her rip, let her scoot! I may be drunk, boys, and I am drunk, but I'm as cunning as a weasel when I'm drunk, unless I'm violent. And when I'm violent in drink I'd fight a regiment, or the side of a house. My reputation at home for violence when I'm drunk is a county matter, not only a matter of my town. Give me a glass jug or a champagne bottle, and I'll clear a bar with any man. What do you think, Jack Ellison?"

"I daresay you would," said Jack.

"Say you're sure of it, or I'll murder you."

" Oh, then I'm sure of it," agreed Jack peaceably.

" Never mind him," said Watson; " he's sober, Bram."

" Poor devil, so he is," said Bram.

It was not till nearly midnight the next day that the *Flying Cloud* crossed to the south'ard of the Line, though in the morning the trade was so strong that she made eleven knots, close-hauled, under everything but her skysail and mizzen-royal. Just before the sun set, Jack Ellison, who was on the fore-t'gallant-yard taking a smoke and having a quiet time, saw something very broad on the starboard bow, over against the glow of the setting sun then breaking through the clouds, that looked like the huge teeth of some monstrous animal.

" It must be land," he said. As no one else seemed to see it, he went down on deck and spoke to the second mate on the poop.

" If you please, Mr. Budd, will you tell me what that land is on the starboard beam?" he asked.

" That's St. Paul's Rocks," said Budd, who certainly had not seen them till then.

That's what they were, rocks a thousand miles from land, set up in the big fairway of the two Atlantics, sharp as a shark's teeth and as deadly. They showed fiercely and fine against the setting sun, outliers of Africa and America, a grim sentinel and very lonely. Jack watched them till they

sank into the shadow of night, and then went below and told the rest.

"Young devil, why didn't you come and say something about it?" asked Watson.

"I didn't think," replied Jack.

"Selfish young swab," said Watson, who hungered for land.

"Don't row the kid about a few measly rocks," said Bram. "You can have my share of Australia, old son."

Next morning the mate said to the skipper, who was still in bed:

"We crossed the Line just before midnight, sir."

"Thanks, Mr. Mackintosh," said the skipper. When he was alone he said:

"I'll—I'll give it up when we get off the Cape."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE SOUTHEAST TRADE

FROM now on the *Flying Cloud* had a good sweet time, for it's sweet when a ship does her best and has a fine chance to do it. The Northeast Trade had been "measly," as all avowed, but then that particular Northeaster is often a poor thing in the way of breezes, and has no great strength, certainly nothing like the energy of its southern partner. The *Flying Cloud* had so far made her southing at the rate of a mud-barge, but now she hung on the breeze gallantly, and with a taut fore-bowline she showed what she could do on a wind. There was not a day from the time she entered the Southeast Trade zone till she left it for the calms of Capricorn that she did not make two hundred and forty maritime knots a day, and there were occasions when she did more, especially when she had the Brazil current underfoot. Everybody brisked up amazingly, if one leaves out the "old man," and the ship's work went on like that of a well-managed shop. She was as clean as a new pin with sand and canvas and souji-mouji and new paint here and there, and at that Jack Ellison

helped. There were times now when he began to see how useful it was to know things, quite independent of his amazing and highly absurd desire to know everything. Was he not going out into the world, and who could say when he might need to go somewhere else than Australia?

"I mayn't like Australia," he said sagely, "and I may want to go to Africa or America or China, and I mayn't have any money. I shall ship before the mast."

Having this great idea before him, he learnt more and more, and could teach most of the apprentices things by now. He could rig a single or even a double Spanish burton and make a Matthew Walker on a four-stranded rope (no easy thing to make, you may like to know), and he was as quick as a monkey up aloft, and had an idea about hauling out the earing, lee or weather. Chips taught him something about tools, and the old Serang was never tired of showing him how to make sennit round or flat or square, and he had all kinds of ideas on paunch-mats and other chafing gear.

"Never knew such a son of a gun," said Budd. It was great praise from Budd, but then Budd was afflicted by Clipperton and Macaulay in his watch, and they knew, as he said despairingly, much less than "nix." And "nix" is "nichts" or "Dutch" for nothing. Why, the "kid," as Budd called him, knew the marks and deeps of the hand-lead, and a burgee from a pennant, and even had sound

theoretic ideas on wire splicing, though the practice of it was beyond him. He had notions, too, about what Budd called "prettiments," that is, "pointing" and bucket knots and double diamond knots, and the Lord only knows what else. He was as busy from morning to night as if he had been hired to labour unceasingly, and when night fell he argued strenuously with Bram on points of seamanship.

Bram was by no means bad at it, and Jack learnt a lot from being asked suddenly, "What would you do if you were in a strong breeze close-hauled, and you carried away your jibboom?" or some such question. That might be asked of many without their having a notion, could it not? But Jack pondered and answered and learnt, and got "as proud as a dog with two tails," it being supposed at sea that such an amazing dog is extremely proud.

He did, however, what Bram disapproved of — that is, he consorted greatly with the crew, and learnt more of their lingo. He was friends with the cooks, or *bhandaris*, and thereby eked out the awful food of the steerage, for the head *bhandari* gave him curious and tasty hashes of curry at times. Jack was often as hungry for food as Davy Jones is for sailors' souls, and not above owning it. He was still growing.

"Elzon, you 'ave *kari*, eh?" asked the *bhandari*.

It was splendid *kari*, or curry, better than he ever got in England.

Often he spent an hour or so during the second dog-watch in the foc'sle with the Lascars. And they knew that he, at any rate, was aware that the Kaptan Sahib ate *afyim*. It appeared that one or two of them likewise took it, but in a steady Oriental fashion, not like a European, who is apt to go to the devil with the pleasant drug. One night the Serang, who knew more English than any of them, again spoke to him about it.

"I t'ink you tell Burra Sahib, you tell mate, eh, Elzon?" he asked.

"I told him that I had heard it," said Ellison, speaking slowly so that the Serang could follow him.

"What he say, Elzon?"

"He no believe it," replied Jack.

"Very good mate, but him damned liar, I t'ink," said the Serang coolly.

Ellison grinned.

"Kaptan Sahib eat *afyim* same as *kari*," said the Serang. "Too muchee *afyim* no good, Elzon. I have *bhai*, brother, who eat him and die, Elzon. I savvy plenty."

How it came about no one quite knew, but the very next day a rumour spread through the ship as to the cause of the captain's illness, and that rumour dealt openly with *afyim*. It seemed that every one had heard it from every one else, but no

one traced it to its source. Jack went into the second cabin and found them all talking about it. Bram, who never forgot anything, instantly seized on Jack.

"Here, sonny, some time ago you came to me asking questions about opium, didn't you?"

"Yes, of course I did."

"Did you know about the skipper?"

"I had an idea about it," answered Jack.

"How did you get hold of it?"

"I heard the men for'ard talking," replied Jack, still cautious about getting the Serang into trouble.

"Do you believe it true?"

"How should I know?" replied Jack stoutly.

"What do I know about opium? I heard some of the Johnnies for'ard say the 'old man' scoffed *afyim*, as they call it, and that's why I asked you about it."

"You're a damn close young swab, then," retorted Bram; "here I'm your pal and as good as a father to you, and you keep a thing like this dark. I think you might have told me. Didn't I plan out this scheme for giving you whiskey, you young devil, and this is the way you treat me? Ain't it rotten, Watson?"

Watson said that it was very wrong of Ellison, but he said it with a wink. The truth is that Bram had been taking care of the whiskey rather early that day.

"Well, well, sit down; I forgive you, Jack, but don't do it again. Here's a pretty thing: our skipper takes to opium when there's good sound liquor aboard! It's out of nature for a seaman, and I'm ashamed to hear it. Do I believe it? Why, boys, I can see the truth a mile off, when it's showed to me. But I'm very sick with Jack, the close young devil."

"He never came and told me about the land the other day," complained the pawnbroker. "I'd have given a shilling to see land. I would. I'm sick of water."

"You shall have your whiskey directly," said Bram, "so shut up, you fence. Didn't you hear me talking? When I'm talking I don't allow any one but Jack and Watson to interrupt me, don't you savvy that, you taker-in of stolen property? But as I was saying, the opium racket is wicked. Does the mate know, Jack?"

"I told him," said Jack.

"And not me?" howled Bram. "If I weren't weak in my legs, owing to having taken some water after breakfast, I would get up, and lam into you, you young devil. He told old Mac and not me, his pal!"

Whereupon he wept "like a cow," as Gargantua did. It was very amusing and highly immoral, and as the rest roared with laughter, Bram cheered up and talked nine hundred and ninety to the

dozen when the whiskey was produced by Watson and shared out in tin pannikins.

"Isn't it remarkable," said Bram, glaring fiercely at the world in general, "isn't it remarkable we all know this and the 'old man' doesn't know we know it? Boys, we're out of luck. I foresee grave disasters, horrid disasters, wrecks, pestilences, and famines, not but what we've famine here now, for of all the hash I ever scoffed, the *Flying Cloud's* hash is the worst. But opium! Boys, the skipper takes opium. I knew it the moment I set eyes on him! I tell you I did. I kept it dark, out of consideration for the poor old skipper, but I knew it.

"I've sailed East, I've been in India, in Calcutta, Bombay, up the Gulf of Martaban, at Anjer, in Singapore, and in China. Opium I know like the alphabet, all its ways and its tricks. I used to take it myself in huge lumps, but somehow I'm such a poor sleeper it had no effect on me. But you see if it don't do for the skipper. He'll either sleep and die, or get mad and play Old Harry. I doubt if we'll ever see Australia. I felt downcast when I came on board, and it wasn't all leaving my girls. I had a presentiment, so help me! I had a horrid sort of feeling that the pawnbroker would be drowned at the very least. And think of the skipper's wife! She's a beauty, a real handsome piece, a ducky, a darling. I could have loved such a woman myself, if I'd been asked nicely, and here

her man is opiumizing. I always told my father it was a sad rotten world, and often enough he owned it was. He's a preacher, I can tell you, but very strict when he's sober. I believe that young devil Jack's a rampant atheist. He believes in Darwin."

"Oh, go to bed," said Jack.

"If you say I'm a monkey, I'll murder you," roared Bram; "and if you say my father's one, I'll — oh I'll murder you again! Here we are running to the south'ard like blazes in a fine trade-wind, and we've whiskey galore, and a skipper taking opium and atheists aboard. We'll never reach Australia, boys, and we all want to get there to turn over a new leaf. Such a lot of miserable wicked skunks as ourselves I never saw. I hope we shall be drowned comfortably, and done for, for I'm tired of trying to be a hard-workin' Johnny. I wish opium had any effect on me, but it keeps me awake, which shows I'm a remarkable character: as I am. But I'm not an atheist. I'd scorn to be. Boys, is it night or morning, and should I turn in or go on deck, or fight the crowd, or do anything else judicious? "

Whereupon they all swore that it was midnight, and that he had better go to bed. He went weeping, but when Watson and Jack tucked him in, he smiled benignly, and said, "Bless you, bless you! "

"He's a thundering sight madder than the

skipper," said Watson. " What made him say you were an atheist, Jack? "

" Oh, I told him I didn't believe everything I heard," said Jack.

" Well, I don't either," said Watson, pensively, as he took a drink out of the bottle.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE CALMS OF CAPRICORN

It was little more than a week from the time she picked up the trade-wind that the *Flying Cloud* lost it again, about the twenty-seventh parallel. This shows that she moved; that she "humped herself," as Bram said. She gave a splendid show and held up to the good breeze like a yacht. Every one was pleased with her. Old Mac patted her on the rail, and nodded and said, "Oh, my beauty!" There's nothing so splendid as to feel the ship all alive, and to wake up with her as she heads the rising sea and, even within the quiet tropics, flings a salt dash of spray about the bone-dry decks.

But day by day the trade died, until, in latitude  $27^{\circ}$  S. and longitude  $34^{\circ}$  W., the wind declined to blow at all after decreasing almost suddenly to a three-knot breeze.

She was in the calms of Capricorn, and once more boxed the compass as she swung in the South Connecting Current that runs east towards Tristan da Cunha.

"'Tis like waiting for a train," said old Mac, grumbling. He wanted Australia, and wanted it soon. Things went from bad to worse with the

skipper, and it was rare to see him on deck. He prowled about below, for the most part walking in the saloon, when he was not "resting" as he called it.

"If we could only get him there," said Jane Dundas. She believed doctors could cure him. But for a woman of her proud spirit there were hours when she hated him.

"Let's get into hard weather off the Cape, ma'am," said the mate the first night the *Flying Cloud* was becalmed again, "and if anything will rouse him it's that. He used to love a gale better than his food, and better far than liquor. 'Tis a strange thing a man who never touched liquor should take this."

He did not understand the nature of opium, nor the nature of man's body when long subdued to it.

"If I could only find it," she said.

"It's a notion, ma'am, aye, it's a notion," said the mate. "Have you looked for it?"

"I'm sure I know where it is, Mr. Mackintosh," she answered, "but it's locked fast."

"If you only found it?"

"I'd throw it overboard," she cried.

She too knew nothing of its power.

"Then he'd be free."

That is what the deserted wife believed. It seemed to her and the old mate that all they had to do was to find the opium, and there was the sea for it.

"He hides the key or carries it, ma'am?"

She caught old Mac's arm.

"I searched him for it when he was like a log and couldn't find it."

"Ah! he's cunning. I've heard that drunkards and the like are very cunning, ma'am. It takes intellect to circumvent them; aye, and even then a wise man is often left."

"I've searched everywhere," she said, "everywhere!"

"You may come on it any time."

"If I do —"

"He don't know you've looked?"

"I don't know what he knows," she answered bitterly. "He looks at me at times as if I were an enemy. Perhaps he knows."

"There's not a soul but knows now in the ship, ma'am," whispered the mate.

"How can they?"

"They do. Young Ellison told me days ago, and he swore straight, and I believed him, that he'd never said a word."

"It's horrible," she said in a hard, low voice. "It's like a dream. Am I drugged myself? I'll try to find the key again."

But the captain knew well what she was looking for, and with all the cunning of a madman (what else is he who takes opium?), he had concealed not only the key but a quantity of the drug itself, over and above what he kept locked up.

"Looking for my key, is she?" he said grinning. "Well, if she can find it she's welcome to it. I'm no fool, Jane."

He hid it in the lining of her own box, and laughed every time she went there. But lest by any chance she should discover it in such an unlikely spot, he hid nearly a pound of the drug elsewhere.

"That's clever of me," he said; "oh, I'm no fool. Besides, when we're off the Cape, or round it, and well to the east'ard, I'll give it up."

Or perhaps off Cape Leeuwin, or in Melbourne, or next voyage!

And so they drifted through the calms and came out in the region of the west winds and ran for the south'ard of the Cape in breezes that ever grew stronger.

"Off the Cape, or when we are well to the east'ard, I'll give it up," said the skipper.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### OFF THE CAPE

THE calms of Capricorn had held the *Flying Cloud* no great time, for there was only one dead day of no wind till she got out of them, and found a steady westerly breeze that strengthened hourly. The skipper might be mad on opium, but he **knew** the seas, and so did the mate, and they worked straight across the calm belt, being in no hurry — as fools are — to make easting when southing would give them all they wanted. At sea for the most part the longest way round is the shortest way there, and he who wants the Brave West Winds, or the Passage Winds or the Monsoons, has to go to seek them where they blow. There's a deal to know about winds, and as to their "blowing where they list," why, truly, they do nothing of the sort, and are nigh as regular as mail-boats and can be set out on a time-table, and the man who misses them is mostly not so much unlucky as unwise.

So presently the *Flying Cloud*, having shifted her tropic suit of canvas for a hard weather one, found herself booming south of Gough Island, going strong with a wind on the starboard quarter and a fine lively sea following — a sea of rising

energy, blue and very splendid in the sun. The energy of the sea and the wind and the fine breath of it inspired every one to hope and courage. It's a poor fool (or an opium-eater, say) who is not livelier and a finer man and gayer, more apt to sing and laugh, when his ship lifts her decks beneath him so gallantly. There's such a feel about things ; one's blood runs like the seas, runs in a jolly rhythm, sings as it goes. Now and again the ship plays half a point or so, and slaps a little water aboard, and it seems just like her fun. To wear a smile on one's face and to have the sea fling a pint of salt on one's ruddy cheek is as lively as good jesting. Men feel their muscles, throw their shoulders back, and say " What ho! " or " What cheer! " or " Let her rip," or " So oh, my beauty! " It's a fine dry or wet world when the west wind blows. There are magnificent times at sea, when good men work in the sun and wind.

So they drew up with the Cape, or to the tormented Cape's latitude, meaning to go well to the south'ard on a composite Great Circle Track with a maximum latitude of  $47^{\circ}$  S., or perhaps a little more, as it was summer in the Southern Hemisphere. But summer or no summer, the Cape — Cabo de todos los Tormientos, as Vasco da Gama called it — is the very devil of a neighbourhood. There's no such windy spot on the windy earth. Even Wellington, in New Zealand, whose

natives clap their hands to their hats as they come round any corner, is calm to it. Tall and gallant ships drowse their flying kites there, take their hats off, so to speak, and go a bit soberly. Currents hot and currents cold, the South Antarctic Drift and the Mozambique meet thereabouts and drop what they carry on the Great Agulhas Bank, whose edges roar with mighty overfalls and tremendous races. Half the winds that blow thereabouts may rank as gales; there's no telling what will come next or how strong it will be, whether it's southeast or southwest or what not. South of the Cape the glass is always low; there's no high pressure thereabouts, and when it's fine weather it's a case of "look out!" This is the home of the Brave West Winds. There seamen speak of the Roaring Forties, the windy, roaring seas of Forty South Latitude. There is no fun in the Cape weather, for the Horn is a joke to it, if one only speaks of passages to the eastward. But if the Cape is no joke, it's a mighty tonic, a trier and maker of seamen: a big windy school for such as follow the sea.

This, and much more, was what old Mac told young Ellison as they drew up with the breeding-place of gales, till the boy was as eager to see and hear what the Cape had to say as any brave lad is to go to his first big school and learn much more than Latin. After a fight or two and a black eye or so such a boy's half a man. Jack had two

fight, or something equivalent, before they shaped a course for the east, for the *Flying Cloud* picked up a roaring, rousing breeze when her course was still southeast by south and the Agulhas was even yet on her port beam. The very birds—Cape hens and Mollyhawks and petrels—screamed of wind before the wind screamed and sent them flying.

The old *Cloud*, as they called her shortly, was in a ripping, tearing, smothering southwester before they knew where they were. They stripped her to what canvas she could stand one morning bright and early, though it was no bright morning, but one as dark and as tonic as some high mountain hidden in western windy clouds. She had enough to do under her reefed foresail and her lower topsails with the wind on the starboard beam, for there are no sweet regular seas with the Cape within naming latitude, to phrase it so.

"Let 'em talk of the Horn as they will, my lad," said old Mac, "but I've known the seas off the Horn as mild as milk. I've known it calm there, but I want to meet the liar that's met calm seas off the Cape and to the south'ard. Why, I've rounded the Horn with skysails set and all the stunsails flowing. It was foolish to have 'em, maybe, but there's the truth. It was the sweetest weather, warm too, and as balmy as if some blooming spice island was on our weather. But here you'll get the truth of things, boy, cross seas, pyramidal! Oh, it's hell at times!"

Oh, but it was splendid! There's nothing so sweet, so great, so courage-creating as those seas. They might make men out of monkeys, as Budd remarked sagaciously, following the lead of old Mac in praise of such hard weather, when he lipped the salt and loved it. But if good men became greater men, some small ones became less. The Lascars, poor devils! the children of bright skies and warm, funk'd it amazingly, and growing blue in the cold that brought colour into white men's cheeks, became blue in their minds and feared to go aloft. Even the old Serang, on whom the weight of the men lay, who was responsible for them, was not what he had been. He didn't run about the decks cheerfully, nor did he cry out for "Elzon" to come and help him. He took on a sad under-the-weather aspect, and shook his head dolorously when the wind sang out in notes of thunder, and the chorus of the windy rigging grew musical. The men took to being ill, and the nature of such men is to be more or less ill when they say they are. Some can die when they want to die by letting themselves go. And, indeed, they were not strong. They skulked into corners; many were missing if they were called out at night. They were found in the fore-peak, in the sail-locker under sails; and the Serang and his two mates had to kick them out and up aloft. They squealed sadly, and wept as they went, and embracing cold canvas, shed tears on it, the poor devils!

Off the Cape, but a long way to the south of it and the Agulhas Bank, they got a snorter, a rip-snorter, a living gale, one that sung out "Stand from under," so to speak, and made the *Flying Cloud* shake off a shear-pole or two and a few other fakements or gadgets, and very nearly sent the main-topgallant-mast over the side. They had to rig up preventer-backstays and go over everything as carefully as a nervous householder goes over things in the basement of his home during a wet and windy burglarious night. The old hooker raged and tumbled in the current of cross seas, and took them aboard everywhere — lee rail and weather, over the very taffrail; and as for the foc'sle head, it was an intermittent Niagara. The men's quarters were as wet as a swab, and so were the 'tween-decks, for the matter of that. She was a damp ship at such times, and the old booby-hatch leaked, and what with seas coming aboard almost every time the hatch was opened, no byre in a wet field was much better. There wasn't a soul who didn't howl and growl and groan, except Bram and Ellison, and they cursed terribly, for Bram had a gift of swearing, and Jack learned it even faster than seamanship and the nature of the seas. It was as bad as being in a swamp in winter; even George the steward, the cheerfulest of wandering men, said he'd be damned if he'd ever had such a job, as he brewed water and muck. Blankets fairly smoked; men steamed with the damp, and argued

that they must presently be rheumatic and ruined for life. A deuce of a time!

The *Flying Cloud* was a lively enough craft in a seaway, but now, in such a cross, complicated Cape sea, she was simply like a corked bottle dancing in a lively mill-race. She climbed and lunged and plunged and climbed again, and taking a most prodigious smack from the south delivered an equal one to the north. The seas were truly pyramidal, for when up aloft one could note the march of yesterday's gale from the southeast and that of to-day's. The surface of the white ocean was agitated, fluctuant, puzzling. The men at the wheel were often in difficulties, and often enough could manage nothing. There's a way of meeting a sea and a way of avoiding it; now the most prodigious opposition can be evaded and the crest sinks harmless, but here, in such a day and such latitudes, often no cleverness avails. It's a choice of evils: up helm or down, a sea comes aboard, green and roaring, and fills her to the t'gallant-rail, floating gear off the pins and strewing the cleared decks with a kelp-like tangle of halliards, clew-lines, and the rest.

"We're not likely to get much worse this trip," said Bram, as he smoked and played Nap down below with Watson. The rest were in their bunks and scared to death. Walker cried. The pawnbroker moaned. The little tenor sang very small indeed; his top note was a cry for George, the

steward. Bram, while he dealt, told them they were a lot of measly curs. With such encouragement they passed a frightened day.

"However, it's pretty rough," said Bram, "and we're not likely to get worse."

He was optimistic. There was Cape Leeuwin ahead, as one knows, and a good Southerly Circle Track, however composite, however flattened off on a Mercator's chart, always has fine possibilities even in summer-time. Not likely to get worse, eh?

There was no getting Jack Ellison to play Nap. There was the wide wet world for him on deck and a clear poop, with present leave from old Mac, or Budd, to come up and take lessons in things.

"Play Nap, indeed!"

He scorned the notion, changed wet clothes and went on deck again, and in borrowed oilskins faced everything joyously.

There are days one remembers out of days that pass in humble indistinguished order. There's a day that's ennobled, decorated, made for honour as some are for oblivion or dishonour. This was a day sublime, uplifted, a celebrated, shining day, a day starry over gloom in Jack's full memory: a day of remembered sights and sounds and knowledge. The ship, driven by monstrous and overwhelming forces, was yet strong and not overwhelmed. She flung herself from crest to crest,

she rolled like a wounded whale and spouted from her scuppers whitest water. The low sky, whipped to scudding rags, swept northeast; the song of the wind was glorious and yet a thing to fear: it spoke tremendously.

Jack watched the ship with all that growing sense of affection which comes to those who inherit the sea and follow it. For such there is no true fear so long as she holds together, and the old *Cloud* was strong. When in the Bay the wind had blown as fiercely: had been as big in squalls and as great in voice. Yet this was a different sea: a cross sea, a tumult of angry waters that came from all sides and piled themselves in sudden pyramids and shapeless cones that fell away into dark hollows as if to invite the ship to deep destruction. She took the lifting seas on board and once or twice filled even to the rail, and then rolling discharged them in a roaring cataract, and once more checking her roll let them swash inboard.

"I wonder what it's like on the edge of the Bank," said old Mac.

For on the great Agulhas Bank's verge are perhaps the worst seas of the world. The *Flying Cloud* was well to the south'ard.

"What ho! Let her rip!" said the old mate. But he watched her and the men at the wheel — Lalu, and Mahomet the Sidi boy, the latter at the lee-wheel, for he was a stupid man, and though as strong as a bull-elephant, not to be trusted to

note in time what things the sea would do. Lalu's real mate was sick.

The sight of the *Cloud's* great contest, her big doings, inspired Jack like any war-chant. There are those who rise like warriors to the trumpet of the charging wind and become sublime themselves — sublime, courageous, happy. The swing of the ship as she lifted and yawed and recovered was grand; there was something adequate about her. She was equal to things and made those within her bulwarks equal. Aye, and more than equal! Jack sang a little to himself and swung his arms and caught a brave delicious breath, and felt his strength and the sea's strength. How was it that all were not like that, all equal to their big desires, all brave and strong? And as he asked it the skipper crawled on deck, came up the companion and stood by the mizzenmast, clinging to the fife-rail. He stood there quietly, dull-eyed, downcast, half-asleep, and when old Mac went towards him, he lifted a dull eye to him: an eye with a nearly invisible pupil — the pupil of opium.

"'Tis a breeze, sir," said Mac respectfully and yet gloomily. Who could be cheerful with this figure of fate upon the poop: this man who ate disaster and slept when there was such a gift of wind?

"Aye," said the skipper thickly, "a good breeze. Couldn't she stand a little more, Mr.

Mackintosh? What's wrong with an upper top-sail, eh? "

The mate stared.

"Why, sir, with all respect, sir, I think she's got all she can carry and in such a sea, too," he replied.

The skipper shook his head.

"Aye, 'tis a rare Cape sea, but I'd have socked it to her years ago. Somehow I'm not what I was, Mr. Mackintosh; it's age, doubtless, but I've swung my main-t'gall'ns'l in such weather before now. Do as you will, do as you will!"

He stood mumbling.

"Why, by God! Mr. Mackintosh, I've had stunsails out in weather no worse. I used to be a devil for stunsails now, so I did. They used to call me Stunsail-Boom Dundas! We're more careful now, so we are. But you wait till we get out of these cross Cape seas and I'll show you, I'll show you! Why, this is nothing of a breeze. The wife said it was blowing a gale. That's the way with women, isn't it? I'll go below again and get my sleep in, Mr. Mackintosh."

So he crawled down again, and old Mac stood by the weather rail and looked into the sea and mourned for him.

"A fine man once, and now a little drug's got him and he's fine no more. Drugs are worse than some women, by the Lord they are! You can't carry a she-devil in your pocket to torment

you, but there's the drug in a pill-box, and this poor devil at its mercy, and it has none. Lush is better; by the Lord, I feel as if I could take my whack and be drunk! I've the responsibility, but I'm not skipper. I'll bet the ship and all she carries he'll be up one of these days and play at his carrying-on game. Drug-drunk, or sober, he's great at that; plays old hell, so he does, with canvas, and logs it down prettily, or makes me do it. Well, well, poor Mrs. Dundas, she's as white as foam now, all her lively colour gone: she that was as red as a glowing dawn and as stormy. Trouble has eaten her up, as he eats opium. It's a sad world — a mad world, as that devil Bram Gray said! ”

He let himself go a bit with the boy, with young Ellison, and spoke openly of the skipper's state. For, after all, it was Jack who had told them, and he was a kind, discreet boy, and good enough and modest in his way, in spite of his ripping out monstrous imitative oaths learned from Bram.

“ Why, young fellow, he's a goner, for sure, ” groaned old Mac.

“ You can't get it away from him, sir? ” asked Jack.

The mate leaned on his shoulder.

“ We're trying, my lad. She's trying. ”

It seemed to his ignorance it would be a good thing.

"I hope Mrs. Dundas will get it, sir," said Ellison.

And just then old Mac lifted his head, and looking out to loo'ard, caught sight of something. He pointed away a point or two on the lee bow.

"D'y'e see anything, Ellison?" he asked.

"Oh, sir, another ship," said Ellison.

Truly there was a barque of something under a thousand tons, perhaps, bound the same way as themselves, and not so far away but that they could see her topsails and even her fore-course as she lifted. In all the great seas and the wide wan wastes of it this was the first Jack had seen so close at hand save the vessel off the Line.

"We're overhauling her fast," said Mac, in the fine joy that the seaman feels in the race and the great loneliness of the sea. "She's makin' heavy weather of it, too."

Jack ran down on the main-deck, and up aloft at the main. He wanted to see her. He climbed aloft till he was snug on the upper main-topsail-yard with his arm about the tie. In a minute or so most of those below knew there was another vessel close aboard and they showed up — or some of them did: those who didn't fear the sea. Presently Bram and Watson (for by now Watson went aloft at times) came on the topsail-yard, too.

"Well, sonny, so you're here," said Bram.

"Better than playing Nap, Bram," said the boy. "Don't it blow though?"

"Oh, some," said Bram. "Look at her pitch!"

They came up with her hand over hand, for the *Cloud* was sailing, was moving, and "no fatal error," as Bram said.

"Oh, Lord! isn't it fine?" said Jack.

He saw now what a thing a ship was. Why, she was nothing, and yet so big and brave! She was a tormented creature of the deep, a whale, a rolling, pitching, driven animal, all alive, strong, animated. The cross, tormented seas wallowed about her in endless unabated aggression; they leaped at her like white wolves, climbed aboard, or failed to climb when she eluded them or beat them off. There was a great wetness in the stormy splendid wind that drove her headlong; the dull gleams of the sea in the glancing planes of it and the interlacing curves of the rising waves were a great picture. Under him he saw the *Cloud*, and she looked big and strong; yonder was a lesser ship that seemed so much less as to be fearful. He saw her lift and drive, and lift again and show her dripping fore-foot and twenty feet of her keel free of the water; then she dived and he saw no more than the yards and her masts and the dull gray of her arched canvas dim against the gray dance of the hills of the sea.

"She's all right," said Bram. "I tell you a ship running in a heavy sea is no mean thing, lad."

A mean thing, indeed! They came up with her,

were on her quarter within half a mile, and then drew abreast.

She could stand it, and was not making bad weather of it either. A brave ship, by all the gods, by Neptune and his winds! There are big things on this solid earth, no doubt, but there's nothing made by man's hands, no tower, or great stronghold, no magnificent thing of art, so tremendous and so lovely as a running ship in a great sea. It breaks one's heart to think that they shall pass and be no more; that their white wings shall be furled; that they shall die in the passing of stormy time like some sea-bird of amplest pinions that shall not face the winds again.

They saw a little man upon the wild, windy poop. He lifted a hand and saluted them. And such a man shall die, even as old Mac must. But, by the gods, such men have lived, and few men live although they die. Oh, the pity of it!

An hour later the strange sail was smothered out of sight astern in a ripping, windy squall, and the smother of the creaming whitened seas. But the *Flying Cloud*, being far enough to the south'ard, squared away a little as the wind westered and entered on her six-thousand-mile run through the longitudes along her composite Circle Track. What ho! let her rip! let her scoot! these are the Roaring Forties, these the latitudes of the Brave West Winds!

## CHAPTER XXVII

### RUNNING DOWN THE EASTING

THE *Flying Cloud* ran down her easting in fine style, carrying good strong working breezes with her all the way, and here and there getting a rousing westerly gale that made up in some measure for her long delays north of the Line. The wind was often keen, and the Lascars found it cold, but no one else minded the fine tang in the air. She carried sail gallantly, that's the truth, and was away to the eastward of lonely bird-haunted Kerguelen almost before she knew it.

"She moves, boy, she moves," said old Mac exultantly to Ellison. They were great friends now, and often and often Jack spent the middle watch with him and after midnight made cocoa in the galley for both.

"Why, another week at this rate and we'll be south of Cape Leeuwin," said Mackintosh. "That's another windy corner of the world, Ellison. I've known rare snorters there, real fizzlers, I can tell you."

He might know another yet.

"But we'll go into Hobson's Bay without a stunsail-boom on board," he said.

That was likely enough, for the skipper, waking up suddenly in the southern Indian Ocean, had been at his own game — a very mad one — with the booms. He came up one day, when it was blowing three-quarters of a gale and the *Cloud* was carrying her main-t'gall'ns'l over a reefed topsail, and sent the booms aloft there and then.

"It's madness," growled Mac; but up they went. That night, in the second dog-watch, there was the very devil to pay up aloft, and one boom went after another, breaking like matches. A sane man would have been satisfied, but there was no sanity in Dundas. He sent the Lascars up aloft to rig out fresh booms in the dark of the night, and the new booms held till morning and then carried away again. But this was the skipper's last effort to do things. He smiled when he heard there was no other boom left, and went to his cabin. And the next night Mrs. Dundas found the key of the drawer in which he kept most of the drug. It was nearly midnight when she came across it as she looked for something in her trunk, and for a moment she believed it must be one she had lost herself. Then she tried the drawer and opened it.

There was a strong light in the cabin, for the lamp burned brightly; but the captain, who had taken a big dose, lay in his clothes as sound asleep as if he were dead. She looked at him and spoke. He never stirred.

"I've got it," she said. She found a big ball of opium that weighed more than two pounds, and some cakes of it as well. Though Jane Dundas had never seen the drug in any form she knew that this must be what she sought. She took it out and locked up the drawer again, and dropped the key into the lining of the trunk from which she had taken it. Then she went on deck and found Mackintosh. He saw her as she came up the companion and went to her in the darkness.

"Is it you, ma'am?" he asked.

"I've got it," she said.

"What, ma'am?"

"The opium, Mr. Mackintosh."

"You found the key?"

"He had hidden it in my own trunk, in the lining," she whispered.

"That was cunning," said old Mac. But those who use such drugs grow cunning against all who would save them.

"Have you got it all, ma'am?"

She said she had. She thought so.

"Then overboard with the damnable stuff," said the mate.

She went to the side and dropped it over into the leaping eager sea.

"Oh, will he be what he used to be?" she cried.

"He'll be all right," said old Mac, who knew nothing of these things. "Go and get a sleep yourself, ma'am. Now you can rest."

Indeed she needed a rest, and when she went below again she lay down, and after long hours slept. She dreamed that her husband was a man again.

Yet on the morrow and the day after there was no change in him, and she knew, and Mac knew, that he must have secreted some upon him or must have some other hidden store. He slept and dozed half his time that he should have been awake, and showed no resentment, no anger or surprise. Yet on the third day there was a change in him. There was at times an odd grin upon his face; he spoke to himself. Once he spoke aloud.

"I'm too clever for 'em," said the captain.

It is the nature of a man who consumes increasing quantities of opium to be undisturbed in his mind. When he found that his big store had been discovered he did nothing but grin.

"She'll not find the other lot," he said. "I'm too clever for her!"

Indeed he had chosen a clever place and he knew it. There were ten thousand chances to one that no one would find it.

"He knows I've taken it," she said to the mate on the fourth day, when old Mac came down to dinner at noon.

"Then he's got more," said Mac.

"He must have more."

"He's too cunning for us. Have you searched everywhere?"

"Everywhere," she answered, with her head drooping and the tears in her eyes.

"Oh, damn him," said Mac to himself. Then he spoke aloud. "We'll soon be in Melbourne, ma'am, and then we'll get a doctor to him. There's nothing else to be done."

There was nothing to be done. And yet what they could not do, chance did. The very next day Jack Ellison was up aloft with one of the Lascar maintopmen helping to renew the seizings of the foot-rope of the upper topsail, and he saw a sail broad on the starboard bow. He sang out, and reported it, and Budd, taking his glass to look at the stranger, dropped it on the deck and cracked the objective. As it happened, Mrs. Dundas was on deck.

"I've smashed the blamed thing," said Budd angrily.

"I'll fetch you the captain's," said Mrs. Dundas. She ran below and brought one up. It was not the skipper's best, but an old-fashioned one that had been hung in slings for over a year without being touched. Or so it seemed. Budd thanked her and took it. It was old and worked hard, and was even then only half closed. He pulled it out with difficulty, and put it to his eye. He saw nothing.

"What's wrong with the thing?" he said, impatiently.

"Can't you see with it, Mr. Budd?"

"I see solid blackness, ma'am," said the second mate. Then he unscrewed the big glass and let some lumps of a dark yellow stuff fall upon the deck.

"The devil," said Budd.

And Jane Dundas knew that it was opium. She picked it up and threw it overboard.

"Yes, the devil," said Jane Dundas whitely. But then she flushed.

"I've saved him," she cried triumphantly.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE CAPTAIN KNOWS

THE wretched skipper grinned almost genially for another day or two. He went about rubbing his hands and muttering.

"Has he still got more?" asked old Mac.

But that very evening in the second dog-watch, when Mac and Mrs. Dundas and her boy were in the big cabin by the stove, the skipper's door opened and he came out. He was a dull, pasty yellow, and dreadful to look at, and his hands shook and his lower lip was loose. Not for days, not for long weeks, had he paid any attention to those he should have loved. He had passed his wife without speaking, had not caressed his boy, had lived alone within his dark enchanted soul. But now he stopped and made a terrible mouth at her.

"You thief," he said suddenly.

"Oh, Will!" she cried.

"You've robbed me, robbed me in my sleep. Give it back to me."

He never looked at Mac, who paled under his tan, for Dundas was so awful to see.

"Give it back, the — the opium!"

"I can't," whispered his wife. Now there was terror in her heart over what she had done. She shook like a leaf.

"You can't! Where is it, woman?"

"I threw it overboard."

She whispered it, and though he had often been hard of hearing, now he heard plainly. He threw up his shaking hands.

"Not all of it, Jane, not all of it!"

"Oh, every bit," she cried. "Wasn't it killing you?"

The captain staggered as if he had got a heavy blow.

"You've thrown it overboard, overboard!"

He fell against the table, caught a chair bolted to the deck and held it tight.

"You've done me, damn you," he said thickly; "you and Mackintosh there, between you, you've done me!"

He raved piteously and wept, and implored her to say she had kept some, and he told her that if she had not he was a dead man. He explained in a pale frenzy the nature of the drug, saying truly that he who has taken it for years must still take it, even though in lesser quantities, or he will go into a horrible collapse and die. And as he raved and implored she sat there growing white, and whiter yet, for it sounded dreadfully true, and in every word and in his frantic accents there was a strong, a fatal corroboration.

"What shall I do?" she cried. And she grew whiter still and fainted, falling forwards on the deck. Her little lad ran to her screaming and tugged at her gown, and Mackintosh was in a maze and knew not what to do. But Dundas did not look at his wife and went on raving, saying that he was a dead man and damned already and in hell. He pulled out a little box and showed it piteously to Mackintosh, saying that he had no more than would last him for two days, and that when that was done he would die.

"You've killed her anyhow," said Mackintosh suddenly, in a fury, "and you're no man."

But Dundas cared for nothing that could be said to him, and when Mac got water and dashed it in his wife's face until she gasped and came back to life again, he still moaned in an agony of fear, and cursed them both frantically. And then Budd, who was on deck, heard him screaming and came below. When Dundas saw him he almost ran to him and took him by the coat.

"They've taken all my opium away, Budd," he said, lamentably. "They've taken it all and thrown it overboard!"

Then he burst into tears and sobbed like a child. The two men looked at each other and at him and at his wife, who sat upon the floor and moaned.

"Good God! sir, be a man!" said Budd. But there was no manhood left in him, and he still clung to the second mate and explained over and over

again that if he did not get more opium he would die. He went into another elaborate explanation of the nature of opium, and all the time shook as if he had the palsy, and poor Budd, who was a good, stupid, kind-hearted fool, did not know whether he was on his head or his heels, and kept on saying, "Oh, sir, be a man, sir," and "That will be all right directly, sir." And presently he led him back into his room and got him to lie down again.

"Don't let my wife come in here, or I will kill her," said the captain.

And Budd went back into the saloon.

"This is a queer business, sir," said Budd to Mackintosh.

And Mackintosh shook his head.

"I'm afraid we've made a horrible mess of it," said old Mac.

"Is what he says true, sir?" asked Budd.

"God knows!" replied the mate. "I don't know anything about the horrible stuff, and I wish I'd never touched it."

Jane Dundas groaned.

"He says she's not to go in and see him, sir," whispered Budd; "he says he'll kill her if she does."

"The man's mad," said Mackintosh in despair, "but he won't do that. I wish I knew what to do."

Yet what could any one do, but get into port

as fast as might be and trust to fate and a good wind for that? There was a good breeze now astern of the *Flying Cloud*, a breeze that strengthened.

“ Maybe we’ll get a Cape Leeuwin buster,” said old Mac, “ and here we are with such a captain! By the Lord, I could take too much to drink! ”

He saw Jane Dundas lie down in a vacant cabin, and then went on deck again. Some men might have taken sail off her, but now he shook the reefs out of the topsails and mastheaded them .

“ If she can’t carry it let her drag it,” said Mac savagely.

She carried it, and, with the skipper in his prime or even in his madness, might have carried more. Yet it was a wild night, and grew wilder yet. For the glass was falling.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE AFYIM - HUNTER

ALL that had happened in the saloon might have been kept for a time from the rest of those on board had it not been for Clipperton, the apprentice, who had heard no little of it through the sky-light. As he was a loud-tongued fool and without discretion, there was no one who had not heard something of it an hour afterwards. It even went for'ard by means of the steward Said, who also had overheard something as he lurked in the port alleyway and listened at the inner saloon door. They talked about the skipper in the foc'sle, and some of them grinned and some were sorry, for the captain had never been unpopular with them.

"No more *afyim*, eh?" said the Serang.

"The Kaptan Sahib will be very sick," said Lalu, the quartermaster.

"The Kaptan Sahib will die," said the Serang.

Some of them knew well what happened to those who took great quantities of *afyim* and were then deprived of it.

"The Kaptan Sahib will die of *dast*," said one old man, "if none of us can give him *afyim*."

They spoke quietly of the Cholera Mother, for though they were Mahomedans, many of them believed what Hindoos believe, just as they had strange notions of *caste* alien from their true religious creed. Then the Serang went out to look for his white friend "Elzon." He asked the steward George to send him up, and presently Jack came on deck into the windy darkness and found the old Serang waiting by the mainmast.

"What is it, Serang?" he asked.

"You come, I want speak with you, Elzon," said the Serang. He led him forward, and in the darkness by the foc'sle he stopped.

"Kaptan Sahib very ill, Elzon, eh?" he whispered loudly.

"Yes, Serang."

"No more *afyim*, eh, Elzon? Missis take and throw overboard, eh? That damn fool t'ing, Elzon, you savvy that."

Ellison did not "savvy" it, but he felt that the old Serang knew.

"Will it be bad for him, Serang?"

"If he take *afyim* plenty and no have, then he die, I t'ink," said the Serang. "I no take, but plenty Lascar man take a little, and they say very bad to have none, Elzon."

Ellison stared at him.

"Why, then there's some for'ard, Serang?"

"A little, I t'ink," said the Serang.

"I'll tell Mackintosh that," thought Ellison.

But before he could speak some one came along for'ard on the starboard side of the deck-house. They were in the deep shadow of the t'gallant-foc'sle, and close by the windlass, and the man did not see them.

" Who's that ? " asked Jack.

" The Kaptan Sahib," whispered the Serang.

" The captain; where's he going? "

But the Serang did not " savvy." Who, indeed, could guess where the captain was going or what he was doing for'ard on such a night?

And then suddenly the old Serang grasped Jack above the elbow.

" Elzon, Elzon, the Kaptan Sahib go into the foc'sle! "

No more amazing thing could happen, so it seemed, than that he who ruled the ship should go for'ard among the men, unless he went at certain hours to see that all was well with them. And yet more amazing things could happen. But the Serang was thunderstruck, and could hardly move. Even Jack knew that this was without precedent; even to him it seemed like madness. For it is a sea custom that dates from the time when first ships' crews and their captains drew apart that, except in the direst need or at appointed times, the foc'sle is sacred to the men.

" Go after him," said Ellison. He thrust the reluctant Serang forward and stood outside himself.

The after-part of the foc'sle was partly wood,

but there was a canvas screen above and behind the windlass. This screen was ragged; there were big holes in it. Through one of these Jack saw what happened; aye, and heard what passed. The dim den the crew inhabited was lighted poorly by two swinging, stinking lamps of oil, that hung from rude iron hooks in holes in the iron deck beams overhead. Some of the men had already turned in, but most of them sat about upon their chests or on the edges of their bunks. The atmosphere was thick and oily; it smelled of fish, and dry ling, even of the remains of a shark that had been caught in the last day of the calms of Capricorn, and the smell of ancient shark is overpowering. Some of the men smoked, and those who knew the acrid fumes of "dope" could have recognized that opium had been smoked there. Underfoot water ran, for the hawse-pipe plugs still leaked and squirted perpetually as the *Flying Cloud* pitched in the rising seas. To this scene and to these men the captain came — the Kaptan Sahib, the great man of the ship! It was horrible to them all, for man is a creature of custom, and these were the creatures of most ancient custom indeed, and subdued to the authority of a thousand years.

The captain's back was to Ellison, but he saw that his shoulders were bowed and that he shook. For those who saw his face, he was as white as death. In the dim lamplight the ghastly shining yellow of his skin did not show. And the man

was thin; as thin as a skeleton. Whoso eats *afyim* grows no flesh upon his bones. His voice was quavering and hoarse, piping, querulous. Though he still had opium he dared not take it yet; not until he had to. He felt the awful need of it, but still he could see how much more he would need it on the morrow.

"I want *afyim*," said the Kaptan Sahib. He spoke to the darkness, to the lamp, to the ring of anxious, intense, and fearful faces in front of him, but to no one specially. He threw up his head with a pitiful effort to keep a brave air of authority. "I want *afyim*, men!"

To the boy who saw and listened the scene was most frightful, most horrible. Here was a good man in the dust, and here a sea-captain wallowed in the foulest despair and in a need that made him piteous.

And none of the men spoke. The Serang came into the foc'sle and the captain twisted round. Perhaps a little flush of shame burned in his pallid face, but it passed.

"Serang, I want *afyim*; I must have it. Who has it here?"

Certain of the men chattered among themselves. Some stole back out of the ring into the darkness up in the eyes of her and fumbled in their bags and chests.

"By God! I'll have it," piped the captain, trembling. He grasped the Serang by the arm.

"Yes, yes, Kaptan Sahib," said the Serang. He spoke fast in Gujeráthi, and others answered him, obviously by their tones declaring that they had none of the drug.

"They say, Kaptan Sahib, that they have none," wailed the Serang.

"They've got it, and I'll have it," said the captain. Then he did a strange thing. He snatched the hanging lamp of the starboard side and went to man after man. He was obviously mad, strained and desperate. He spoke in louder, angrier tones; each man cowered beneath him.

"You've no *afyim*?" he said.

And the poor devil swore piteously that he had none. Then the captain bent down and looked into his eyes as he held the lamp up. He let five men pass, but at the sixth he stayed.

"This man has *afyim*," he said triumphantly. "Which is his chest?"

And in the chest they found, wrapped in a dirty rag, almost an ounce of poor, stinking opium, the worst quality of Abkari. The captain seized it, and the wretched owner wept sorely and lamented, and called upon Allah and the Prophet for help that did not come. But he, at any rate, was not of the dreadful brotherhood who must eat or die. For him, and for most of his fellows, it was but something which softened the hard places of this earth before they went to Paradise and tasted the joys promised by the Prophet.

But for the Kaptan Sahib it was a respite, and added a little to the shortening tale of his wretched days. He went out of the foc'sle and passed along the windy deck, and left Ellison shaking. For the boy had seen, for the first time, something that was utter degradation, and his young heart was sick within him.

He found the Serang beside him again.

" The Kaptan Sahib is mad, Elzon," said the Serang. " What I do, Elzon? You t'ink I tell the Malem Sahib, tell the mate? "

" I'll tell him," said Ellison. " He's not turned in yet. His lamp's alight."

As he went aft he was hardly conscious of the power of the wind, though it boomed wonderfully in the topsails and howled among the rigging and screamed among the hills and hollows of the rising sea.

## CHAPTER XXX

### IN THE MATE'S CABIN

It was two bells in the first watch when Jack Ellison went aft, and as it was the mate's watch below he should have been fast asleep. But Jack had seen that his light was still burning, and he knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Mac.

"I want to see you, sir," said Ellison.

The very look of the boy and the tone of his voice made old Mac alert.

"Why, what is it?" he asked. "What's wrong now?"

"It's the captain, sir."

"What of him, my lad?"

Old Mac's voice was irritable and anxious.

"He's been for'ard, sir, among the men —"

The mate jumped from his chair.

"Good God!" said Mac, "what do you mean?"

And then Jack told him in a low voice, as if he were ashamed of himself for having seen the captain's shame.

"It's fearful," said old Mac; "oh, but this is frightful! What should I do? Did he get much, my lad?"

"I can't tell, sir; I think not, sir," said Jack, "but the old chap he took it from howled and cried, sir."

The mate was almost trembling.

"No such thing ever happened before, boy. It's madness. A captain for'ard, begging of the men! I can't believe it."

Jack understood that easily.

"The Serang and I were talking when he went in —"

"I'll see the Serang," said the mate. Then he said, "No, what use? I believe you, my lad. No one would invent this. I wish we were in Melbourne, lad, that I do."

He was in great agitation. Almost without knowing what he did he took a bottle from a locker, and poured out a strong nip and took it without water. He offered it to Jack. It took the edge off things and eased them both.

"I'll have to tell his wife," said the mate. "But there, young fellow, you can do nothing. Don't tell any one. It's bad enough as it is. I wish we'd never touched his opium."

Ellison stared, wondering.

"Then you got it, sir?"

"Aye, and threw it overboard."

"They say for'ard that if you take it from a man who has been used to it he dies as if he had the cholera, sir."

"You heard them say that?"

"The Serang and Lalu said so, sir."

"I doubt we've been two fools," said the mate, throwing up his hands. "But I must tell her."

He made a motion as if to go. Yet there was hesitation in his speech.

"What good will it do to tell her, sir?" asked Jack.

"None, none," said the mate. "You're right. And we're going to have a teaser to-morrow, my boy; the glass is low and falling steadily. It can blow south of Cape Leeuwin, as I told you. I wonder we don't get it bad already. Well, it will put us nearer port. I wish we were there, with a hospital under our lee and a good doctor handy. I don't believe in 'em much, but there's encouragement in a good one, boy, and what do we know of opium? It's the devil. Give me good honest liquor (take a drop more, Ellison), good honest liquor. We know where we are with that. A man may get drunk, but he sobers down again. But this opium, why, it's the devil! The captain was a good man, a thorough seaman, a nailer at navigation, and now — Well, well, it's a sad world, a damn sad world — and his wife's half dead."

He took another nip, and lighted his pipe with a trembling hand.

"Well, my boy, you've done what you could. You go and turn in. I'll on deck and talk to Budd. Budd's a good chap, a real good chap. He'll

hardly believe it. A captain to go for'ard, into the foc'sle, and beg of the men!"

So Jack went below and Mac went on deck to Budd and told him, and Budd was in amazement.

"I never heard of the like," said Budd. It outraged all his notions, it was out and beyond all strong sea precedent. There's no such place for precedent as the sea.

"Well, there it is, and I know Ellison tells me the truth," said the mate. "He offered to bring me the Serang. What d'ye think I ought to do, Mr. Budd?"

Budd shook his head and scratched it.

"Ah! there you have me, sir, I own it freely," said poor Budd. "But don't you think we might shorten sail, sir?"

The wind was booming grandly and the ship scudded before it like a racing yacht.

"Why, I want to get up with Melbourne, you know," said Mac. "She can stand it, Mr. Budd. Hold on while you can and all you can. I don't believe he's got enough to do him, and we'll be having him in an awful state presently. This is a lesson to me not to interfere where I don't know. Let her swing what she's carrying, Mr. Budd. Oh, I pity that poor woman and our poor captain!"

"It's a sad pity, sir," said Budd.

"I'm thinking it's a sad world all round, Mr. Budd," replied the mate. "Here I've all the

responsibility and yet I'm not captain. And in a day or two I may be in command, if all's true I hear, and I'd rather be a Lascar for'ard than have it happen."

"Well, it can't be helped, sir," said Budd, not altogether unhappily. It would mean a step for him.

"Well, no, it can't," said the mate. "But you keep what you've got swinging and let her have it. I'll try to get an hour before midnight, though I doubt if I shall sleep."

But he slept all right, and Budd, who was the best of fellows, let him lie till it was ten minutes after the hour. He did it out of kindness, yet all the same he remembered that the mate might be the skipper before long.

"But I'd like to get some sail off her," said Budd. He cast uneasy eyes at the main-topgall'n-sail all the rest of his watch. But truly she stood it all right, and the wind did not get as much weight in it yet as one might have reckoned on from the steady fall of the glass.

"It goes down like a bloody ebb-tide," said Budd, as he stood knuckling it when Mac at last relieved him.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE EDGE OF THE HURRICANE

It was possible to tell what weather the *Flying Cloud* was making of it by listening to the squalls of the women-folk in the steerage. They were a land-loving, sea-hating, sea-fearing lot; there was no mistake about that, and these Irish women who came from inland bogs were as good as any glass.

When Jack awoke next morning he heard them appealing already to the Holy Mother and to all the saints, and to their particular friend in the Catholic hagiology. He was sleeping in a hammock slung between 'tween-deck stanchions, for long ago he had deserted his bunk. Bram had made him the hammock out of a piece of an old sail begged from the Serang. As soon as he waked he was dimly conscious of a stir in the world of the sea such as he had never known before, not in the Bay or off the Cape. The frightened whining of the women and the squalling of the children went in naturally enough with the vast breathing of the wind and the wrenched uneasy lifting of the ship as she dived and climbed again some monstrous opposing slope.

"By the Lord, it's blowing," said Jack. He slipped out and dressed, and going into the second cabin, found Bram awake.

"Say, Bram, come on deck. It's blowing like billy oh," said Jack.

"Why, let it blow and be damned," replied Bram. "Why should I go on deck to see it blow? What time is it?"

"Nearly four bells, I guess," said Jack, by which he meant six o'clock in the morning.

"Call me in two hours, my lad," was Bram's reply. So Jack went on deck by himself. As soon as he put his head out of the booby-hatch he knew that it was blowing indeed. It almost took his breath away. And yet what took it away even more was what he saw when he lifted his head. It was weeks since the skipper had smashed every stunsail-boom in the ship, and since then he had never shown up save once or twice at night-time. Now he stood bareheaded at the break of the poop, with his hands clutching the rail. Behind him stood Budd, and the second mate's face was a book to read.

Though the second greaser had hung on to the main-t'gall'ns'l all the first watch, hung on to it like a bulldog since it was the mate's wish that he should do so, yet towards the end of the middle watch old Mac had taken it off her. When Budd came on deck again at four in the morning they agreed that it was just as well to clew up the upper

mizzen-topsail and reef the foresail, for it was blowing hard.

"As strong as the devil," said Mac. "We're going to catch it."

But just after two bells in the morning watch the skipper came on deck and took charge. He looked, not like a man in a dream, but like a man in a nightmare. He was very yellow, and in the early light of the southern summer morning seemed like a ghost.

"Good morning, sir," said Budd.

And the skipper nodded.

"Set that mizzen-topsail," he said suddenly.

"Sir!"

"Set that mizzen-topsail," he repeated.

"I beg your pardon, sir," stammered Budd.

"By God! set that topsail," said the skipper.

The hands came aft and loosed and mastheaded it. The skipper grinned curiously and nodded.

"I want to get to Melbourne," he said.

"That will do you," said Budd to the Serang, but the captain intervened.

"She'll stand the main-t'gall'ns'l," he said shortly. "Set it, Mr. Budd."

Well, they got it set without blowing away and without splitting, for it was a good sail and no mistake about it, and Budd knew his business.

"I mean getting to Melbourne, Mr. Budd," said the skipper. "I'll teach you young men not to waste a good breeze."

He looked in the clear dawn like an image of wasting yellow wax. It was an astonishing clear dawn, bright and splendid; the sky was almost cloudless and the heavens were blue. But the seas were big.

Half an hour later there was some let-up in the wind; it seemed to take off a little as it sometimes will. The skipper, still clutching the rail at the break of the poop, had the fore-t'gall'ns'l set. By this time Budd was wholly speechless and acted like an automaton. He did as he was told, and went about with his eyes bolting out of his head.

"He's mad," said Budd, "mad as a March hare. He'll set 'em all."

The crew were scared already; some of them whitened and grew livid. For though the sails were set, they felt that presently they must be taken in. It was almost as much as the old *Serang* could do to get them up aloft to loosen the t'gal-l'ns'l. But still the captain was not satisfied, though the *Flying Cloud* was not rising to the seas, but ramming them like a battle-ship. She was a white cataract for'ard; the main-deck was never clear. He set the mizzen-t'gall'ns'l, and then told Budd to loose the main-royal.

"Yes, sir," said Budd meekly.

The man ordered up aloft to loose it frankly refused. The *Serang*, who sympathized with him in his heart, kicked him, but not very hard.

"See that pig goes aloft, Mr. Budd," said the

skipper, and he added to himself as Budd went down on the main-deck, "I mean getting to Melbourne."

Between the Serang and Budd the recalcitrant seaman was got into the main-rigging. He was a poor miserable little beast, a Kling, a man of no physique and less pluck. He hung to the rigging and took a step or two in the ratlines, and then turned. Budd leapt after him and beat him with the flat of his hand.

"*Upar jao, toom sooar*," said Budd. He beat him up to the futtock-shrouds, and the Kling would go no further. One of the Malay quarter-masters then volunteered in his place, and the Kling came down on deck. He was kicked for'ard by the Serang and crept into his bunk weeping. By the greatest good luck they set the royal, and the fore-royal too.

"Why he don't shake the reef out of the fore-sail beats me, and I wonder he don't set the skysail and the mainsail," said Budd. If he had been ordered to set them he would have done so, or stunsails either, if there had been any booms left. It was just then that Jack Ellison came on deck. When he saw the skipper and then looked aloft, he was at no loss to understand that he had believed it to be blowing hard when he was below. There wasn't a child who had played with sand by the seashore but would have felt the *Flying Cloud* was being tried high. There was a curious look in

Budd's face, which told a tale. It was a look of sober, astonished alarm. Budd was crushed; he could be surprised no further. He caught Jack's eye and shrugged his shoulders just a trifle, as though to say, "It's not my fault; what do you think *I* can do?"

No sooner were the royals set than the strength of the gale returned. It was very equal, with no squalls in it; it was just wonderfully strong. But though the *Flying Cloud* had been going beautifully under her topsails and the reefed foresail, now she was over-weighted, over-powered, over-driven. She smashed the seas, dived into them, hove them up in the air, scooped them. She went at them like a battering-ram, and from being as sea-kindly a ship as sailed the seas she became as it were half-frenzied.

Yet it was not so greatly the mere strength of the wind itself that made Budd look as he did. In such a breeze, if it were some other quarter of the globe, and if the glass were rising or even steady, a somewhat reckless shipmaster, given to carrying on, might have done so without putting poor Budd into a stupor. But considering that they were on the meridian of Cape Leeuwin, and that the glass was tumbling "down-stairs" like a drunken man, it was enough to make the hair of every sober sides stand on end. And to make sail at such a time was midsummer madness.

That this was to be no ordinary gale was very

obvious, given the evidence of the barometer. The day was actually splendid; by now the sun shone in a great, clear, cloudless, windy space. What clouds there were fled high up in the heavens; they were lofty cumuli without any advance bodies of scud, which showed the solidity and height of the wind current. The seas were not beaten down by any rain; they shone in the sunlight and were intensely blue. Though they lacked the mighty regularity of the rollers off Cape Horn, yet they were rollers all the same, their crests nearly a mile apart. For long minutes it appeared that she descended a great slope marked with white foam. But if there was still some regularity in the seas, there was none in her sea conduct. She was hunted down the slopes and harried furiously upon the great ascents; she appeared giddy, with no true sense of direction; she steered wildly when the seas broke under her counter and lipped the very deck beneath the taffrail.

Nevertheless, for those without experience or great knowledge, and also without fear, she was a wonderful sight, a very wonderful and admirable instrument of man in the great wilderness of ocean. The sounds of her and the quivering impulses of her organism affected Ellison as if he were a register of her motions and her efforts. She took him wholly out of himself; he was only conscious of the wind and salt spray upon his cheeks and lips. He stood on the main-deck, holding on to the poop

ladder close by the mate's cabin, and watched her with unspeakable interest, with a joy that rose with the sea and answered to the great stimulus of the wind. For in the sunlight there could be no fear; and in the visibleness of things there was much encouragement.

Then old Mackintosh came out on deck before his time. He was in his shirt and trousers, and barefoot. He looked up aloft with astonishment, turned and saw Jack standing there, and seemed angry, oppressed, anxious, and bitter. He spoke to the boy.

"The captain —"

"On the poop, sir," said Jack.

The mate turned about and saw the captain. But the captain did not see him; he looked ahead with a fixed gaze.

"I can stand to see canvas blown away with any damned man," said the mate. He turned and went back in his room quickly, where he dressed and brushed his hair and beard with more than ordinary attention.

"A pity we haven't a few more stunsail-booms," said Mac. He put on his best coat when he went to breakfast. He was furious in his heart, furious and bitter. He had taken in sail and the "old man" had set it again.

"And the very bottom knocked out of the glass," said Mac.

He almost forgot that the skipper was a creature

of opium, for his deepest professional pride was wounded. He sat down to eat with drawn brows, and had hardly a word to say to Jane Dundas. Indeed, if she had not spoken, he would have said no more than "Good morning, ma'am."

"The captain's on deck," she said.

"Aye, ma'am," he answered shortly.

"Is it blowing hard, Mr. Mackintosh?"

"Why, ma'am, it feels like it. But we're carrying sail, are we not?"

She understood him fast enough.

"Did Captain Dundas set more?"

"After I'd taken it off of her, ma'am," said Mac.

"Then it will blow harder?"

Old Mac got up and wiped his mouth and moustache.

"Why, ma'am, we're going to have a perisher," he said shortly.

It was nearly eight bells. He went on deck to relieve Budd. He found him at the binnacle. Two of the *Sukkanees* were at the wheel. They sweated as they steered.

"You seem to have set a few kites, Mr. Budd," said Mac; "couldn't you and the captain find a few stunsail-booms, eh?"

The second mate's eyes were still at their widest.

"It's sheer lunacy, begging your pardon, sir," said Budd.

"Oh, don't trouble to beg my pardon," retorted

the mate. "I've known you on and off for years and I've never seen any signs of your being a mad Yank or a carrying-on Scotchman, Mr. Budd. But I can stand to see sails blown away with any man: with any man who holds a Board of Trade certificate that he's qualified to handle a ship. There's nothing insubordinate about me. But how did you manage to set the royals, Mr. Budd? Out of sheer professional curiosity and a desire to learn a wrinkle, I'd like to know how it was done."

"'Twas more good luck than anything else," said Budd; "but, truly, we had a bit of a lull then. They'll not last long, sir."

The mate laughed.

"Last, eh? And a lot more won't."

He was, after all, a bit of a child. He chewed the rag hard. There were men who would have taken the command there and then, and would have sent the drugged lunatic of a skipper to bed, seeing that he stayed there, but he could not. Seventeen years for'ard before he got his second greaser's ticket had settled his initiative for ever, as it mostly does. And, after all, now that Dundas was full of the drug for the time, it was hard to say what one could do. Some men carry sail by nature and can't help it, even without any mad desire to make port. And the skipper, though he looked ill, behaved sanely for the time. Under the unconscious stimulus of the wind and his desire he

became almost normal to look at, save for his pallor. But he and the mate did not speak.

"I'll speak when I'm spoken to," said Mackintosh, "and I'll offer advice when it's asked. If he wants the mainsail set, I'm the man. Why, what's wrong with the cro'jack, too?"

He kept to the starboard side of the deck, which was also the lee side, what lee there was. But the skipper stood at the break of the poop and never moved for an hour. During that hour the main-royal starboard sheet parted, and in a moment there was no main-royal. As the apprentice struck two bells on the little poop bell, the fore-royal split with a report like a pop-gun up aloft, and the small remains of it flogged the yard and made it shake and tremble. But Mac only spat over the rail into the racing sea.

"That's two," said Mac. "Oh, but I can stand to see 'em go. I'm betting the main-t'gall'ns'll be the next."

But it held on wonderfully, seeing the steady increase of the wind. It still held when Bram came on deck and joined Jack under the poop ladders.

"Why, what's the game here?" asked Bram.

"The fore and main royals have just gone," said Jack, without looking at him.

"So they have," said Bram. "Bless my soul! we're carryin' sail and no fatal error. Have you heard what the glass is doing, Jack?"

"Falling fast, so Budd told me," replied the boy, with his eyes still aloft.

"Then it's the skipper, I guess," said Bram. "He must be cracked, my lad, or as drunk as a boiled owl in a pan of hot water. Why, she should be down to the topsails, or I never saw a topsail. He's driving her under."

As they both looked aloft they saw the clear sky show a bright line through the main-t'gall'nsail, and the next moment, with a report hardly louder than a shot-gun's, there was no sail there, and nothing but bolt-ropes. Part of the sail blew over the fore-royal-mast and settled down a mile ahead like a gigantic sea-bird.

"Ain't the 'old man' going to shorten down?" said Bram uneasily.

"A little longer and he'll never get the men aloft," replied Jack, who knew the men and had been for'ard once that morning at the risk of his life.

"At this rate she's shortening herself down," said Bram. "I never saw anything like it."

By now the blue spaces in the heavens were smaller, and the clouds were lower. They showed signs of it, for they were ragged and torn into wisps. The sea looked dangerous and rose fast.

And at ten the fore-t'gall'ns'l went with a pop as when a boy explodes a paper bag.

"That's four," said the mate, as he put a chew

of tobacco in his cheek. . " But we've hardly begun yet."

He looked below at the glass. It was a tenth below twenty-eight, and the surface of the mercury was strongly concave. It had fallen that last tenth since eight bells.

" It will be a good one this," said Mac. " We're in for a southern Indian Ocean hurricane, though they're rare in December. Oh! we'll get it. Well, I can look on with any man."

There was a strange moaning noise across the sea as he went on deck again. And then it seemed like a sound in a great vault. The sky was darkened and the sun went out as the *Flying Cloud* leaped again under a heavy squall.

" This is going to be damned bad, sonny," said Bram. " I've heard sounds like that before."

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE HURRICANE

FOR hours the skipper had stood bareheaded at the break of the poop, with his hands upon the rail and one foot upon a filled fire-bucket in the rack. He had hardly moved, except to shift his feet when the wind scooped some of the water from the buckets and in a backward eddying wash threw it about him. His look was fixed, not aloft, but far away to loo'ard, right ahead of the *Cloud*, as though he saw the city which he desired. His mind was a blank, save for the one mad notion that he had to get there, and for the other notion that no one should shorten sail. He knew well enough, in spite of his madness, for it was madness that drew him to the drug, and not the drug which caused madness, that there was danger of running her under, of dismasting her, of broaching her to. Yet these dangers were nothing to his fear of being without opium. He had sufficient for two days, it might be, and though he told himself, in some still calm inner space of his mind, that no hurricane that ever blew could drive him into port in time, yet in his outer actions he found that a mere false

hope helped him. And when at last he saw that no one could shorten sail, even if he wished to, for he understood the wind and its force and the nature of the men for'ard, he felt easier and happier. Soon after four bells in the forenoon watch he left his station, and turning about made his way below. As he passed the mate he looked at him for the first time with a peculiar bitter triumph as though he said, "Shorten sail if you can."

"Oh, damn you!" said Mackintosh as the captain disappeared. He sent down one of the apprentices for Budd, who had not, as he knew, turned in. Rufford found him smoking peacefully enough. As he went on deck the upper foretopsail blew out of the bolt-ropes with a report like that of a big gun, muffled and subdued by distance.

"What d'ye think of this, Mr. Budd?"

"The skipper —"

"Below," shouted Mac; "he looked at me like a devil and went just now."

"He's hung on long enough —"

"And too long! Can we get a man up aloft?"

"Not if I know 'em, sir," answered Budd.

"That's true enough," said the mate. "Well, she's got to stand it. But this is no common gale, Mr. Budd. This is out of the north, one of the circular storms that they talk of, bred in low latitudes. The glass falls yet."

"Like an ebb-tide, sir," repeated Budd.

"It's the waste of it gets me," said Mac. They stood close together, head to head. "Good canvas like this! It's cruel!"

There's nothing hurts the seaman like it. To stand helpless and see things go!

"I'd ha' had her snugged down lovely by now," growled the mate, "just lovely —"

As he spoke the upper mizzen-topsail split with a frightful crack. In a moment long pennants of it lashed the yard and the rigging and made her shake and quiver.

"Look at that," said Mac. "If the foresail goes, we'll be up the spout, Mr. Budd. But it's a good sail, oh, the best! Yet if it should go, the sticks will be over the side."

As he spoke the fragments of the topsail whipped themselves together into a gigantic rope of sennit, if one might call it such. A piece twelve feet long cracked like a huge whip.

"Couldn't we save the lower mizzen-topsail, sir?" asked Budd.

"I doubt it," said Mac. Then he said, "Let's try."

He went to the break of the poop, and seeing Jack and Bram beneath him, beckoned to the boy, who climbed up the poop ladder to him.

"Watch your chance, my lad, and go for'ard for me and tell the Serang to come aft with the men."

Jack watched his chance and got for'ard, and was nearly washed away by a sea that came over

the starboard cat-head and landed on him as he grabbed a pin in the rail. He scrambled to the foc'sle and opened the door. Inside he found the Serang, looking a little whitish, and laid hold of him.

"The mate wants you and the men aft, Serang," he said.

The Serang looked whiter still, and some of the men who were near him retreated into the darkness for'ard.

"I no can get them, Elzon," said the Serang.

"But you must," said Jack.

Yet in the end it was only the Serang and the two *Tindels*, who were all Malays, and the big negro Sidi boy, who went aft. The others flatly and frantically refused. The mate looked at them doubtfully when they clambered on the poop, all of them drenched and gloomy but Mahomet.

"The others?" asked the mate.

"No damn good, Burra Sahib," piped the Serang. He looked little good either.

Then the matter solved itself; the lower mizzen-topsail's port sheet parted with a clang, and in one moment there was no sail left.

"You can go for'ard again," said the mate savagely. And yet he was relieved.

"Perhaps it's better as it is," he said to Budd. Ellison and Bram, who had been going aloft with the men, went down on the main-deck once more.

"Sonny, my lad," said Bram, when they were

snug up against the poop front and under the ladders, "sonny, my lad, this is no common breeze. This is no foolish blow, my lad, it's a bit cyclonish, that's what it is. I was once on the edge of a bad one in the Bay of Bengal, and it gives me the same hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach as if I'd not eaten anything for weeks. We're in for a piper. Do you hear the sound of it, not the sound of the rigging, but the sound of it away off?"

Jack heard strange moanings well enough. But though he was apprehensive, keenly nervous, and on a strain, he had a curious feeling of joy in him.

"I don't mind it," he said.

"You're an ignorant young fool," said Bram; "you don't want to be drowned, do you?"

"Not exactly, Bram."

"Then you've got a devilish fine chance of it, sonny, my lad," retorted Bram; "and as I'm wet, and it's no better to be drowned on deck than below, I'm going below to change and get a drink."

It was noon, but no one struck eight bells aft or for'ard. Jack at Budd's request, went for'ard again and told the other two *Sukkanees* to come aft and relieve the wheel. Their mates were soaked to the skin with spray, but steamed with heat. The perspiration ran down their faces. Budd and Mac took the wheel from them first, and were then relieved by the other *Sukkanees*. It's ticklish work relieving the wheel in such weather when a vessel's

running. Many a ship's been lost then, has  
broached to and gone down like a stone.

If Bram went down to get a drink, so did the  
mates, one at a time. They took their dinner or  
lunch in the steward's pantry. Said, the steward,  
was in a white panic and acted like a fool. He  
looked as if he had had flour rubbed over his face.  
He brought them whiskey, and opened a big tin of  
preserved herrings. Mac called Ellison in and gave  
him three fingers of whiskey and as many herrings  
as he could eat.

"It's pretty bad, eh, sir?" said Jack.

"Oh, she'll stand it, I hope," said the mate.  
The drink encouraged him. He laughed.

"I've been in much worse in the China Seas.  
What's that?"

Jack put his head out.

"The lower fore-topsail, sir. But only half  
of it."

That was a strange thing, but it was true. The  
whole starboard yard-arm of the sail had blown  
away, but the entire port side was left. How it  
held, as the mate remarked, the Lord only knew,  
but hold it did.

"That midship cloth must be made of boiler  
plate," said the mate. He took another tot.

"You're never likely to see such another racket  
shortening sail, my lad," he said cheerfully. "I'll  
send Budd down."

So Budd came down, and under the influence of

herrings and whiskey half-closed his opened eyes and grew cheerful again.

"It's a rum business, Ellison," said Budd.

"Have we got the worst, sir?" asked Jack.

"Not by long chalks," replied Budd. "The glass is going down like — like whiskey."

It was Budd's first joke, or the first the boy had ever heard him make.

"It's going to be a blind perisher, my lad," said Budd. The glass was down close to 27.50, and still sinking.

When Jack was full up with herrings and biscuit and had taken quite enough whiskey, he went back on deck, this time on the poop. He felt happier because the mates were easier, and he did not understand that it was because of the liquor. Neither of them was drunk, but they had had enough. Old Mac was always a little inclined to what he called "lush," but what bit him now and made him take it was his anger with the captain.

"I'm responsible and I'm not," said Mac; "that's what gets me. I take in sail and he sets it, and he stays here on deck for fear I'd settle a top-sail without consulting him. But now it's getting to its worst, he's down below at his opium, and likely fast asleep. I can be captain or I can be mate, but to be neither one nor the other makes me very mad, Mr. Budd."

The *Flying Cloud* was now carrying the reefed foresail, half the lower fore-topsail (the one which

had split), the two main-topsails, and the fore-topmast-staysail, with both sheets well flat. All the other yards were decorated with Irish pennants — that is to say, with canvas rags. Even the skysail and the mizzen-royal, which had never been set, had blown out of the gaskets. The main-course and the cro'jack were furled and in good enough case, though presently Budd went aloft on the cro'jack-yard and passed a couple of preventer-gaskets, as the sail showed signs of getting loose.

"The Lord send us through with it," said old Mac. His eyes were a trifle bloodshot. But perhaps that was the wind.

Now it seemed as if the very sky was down on the ship. At times there was a heavy darkness overhead that almost rested on the trucks of the masts. The sea, which in the morning had been so brightly and so splendidly blue, so like a deep-sea sapphire, was now a deathly white. Though the rollers showed themselves by the behaviour of the ship, the lesser seas between them were beaten flat. They were creamy, the spindrift rolled across them like the thick glutinous foam that edges weedy shores after a great gale. So far, not a drop of rain had fallen: there was a peculiar dryness in the air save for the spray it carried. It was very warm, as though, indeed, it came from the tropics, instead of from the pole. It stung the cheeks as if it were electric, but then its very force made it

sting. No man could face it open-eyed; no one could breathe it open-mouthed.

From noon that day till eight bells in the afternoon watch (though watch there was none, and no man slept but the one who should have been most keen on waking), there was a prodigious sense of anguish in the air. The light came and went; for an hour it was dark, and then it grew brighter, but the wind increased amazingly: it screamed in the rigging and boomed in the arched sails; little things went from aloft — a shear-pole or two, and, by the breaking of a seizing, the port foot-rope of the main-t'gallan'sail. Continually small pieces of canvas parted from the yards, and they flew ahead like petrels; they dived, were lifted up, and no man saw them reach the water.

In a lesser wind the sea must have been awful; it would have swollen beyond tradition; it would have made a record, and perhaps have wrecked the knowledge of it by swallowing the very ship. But now the flat, trodden, whining, crying seas in their ghastly whiteness were as awful as any lifting crests. They were like moving planes of drifting snow, with here and there black gulfs in them where there was a momentary lee. The predominant undernote heard in all the cry of the hurricane was a fierce sibilance, a clamour of hisses, the massed sound of the breaking of the bells and beads of foam. The strangest peculiarity of the driving spindrift was its curious slowness. It

seemed to roll sluggishly and as reluctantly as if it were strangely tired.

The ship itself was a creature that lived but for the moment. Or so it seemed. There were times when she appeared strangely light, uplifted, thrown on a crest of sea, but after that she plunged deep, was oppressed and struggled as if the wind bore upon her from the heights of the sky. Truly, without a shred of canvas or with no more than the fragments that yet held to the jackstays, she would have been in trouble; but now with the main-top-sails and the foresail, though it was reefed, she was almost overpowered. It was a wonder that any canvas stood: none stood that was not heavy and new.

And even yet the worst had not come. The glass told it, but the mates knew it without help.

"By the Lord! we *must* get that upper topsail off her," said Mac. He was not drunk, but he was cheerful with drink and daring. "Will you tackle it, Mr. Budd?"

"If you say so, sir," replied Budd gravely, "though likely enough she'll go when we settle the halliards."

Budd went for'ard himself and fetched out of the foc'sle the Serang, his two *Tindels*, one other Malay, and the big Sidi boy. He found the foc'sle strangely empty. When word was passed that he was coming for'ard many of the Lascars fled to the fore-peak; they went below and hid themselves in

the darkness. He only brought such as would come easily. And yet none came easily but himself and Jack Ellison and Bram Gray and Watson, whom Bram called from below. With them went the four apprentices, or rather the three, for little Rufford Budd refused to take.

When Budd let the topsail-halliards go the yard refused to come down. It only moved when they tailed on the spilling-lines, and brought it down by main force. Thrice while they were hauling on them seas came aboard; once Macaulay was nearly washed over the rail. It was a momentary relief to get off the main-deck into the rigging. Budd led them.

Perhaps none of them could have said afterward how it came about that he found himself on the topsail-yard. No one went over the rim of the top, for the second mate climbed through the lubber's hole, that no lubber would now have attempted, and the rest followed him. As they gathered in the maintop the force of the wind was tremendous. It was almost impossible to move against it; it had the force of a strong current of water; it was not air, but a liquid. And yet one by one they followed Budd up the topmast-rigging, and at last got out upon the yard itself. No man could hear the other speak. If one shouted the next saw his lips move and that was all. Every one was curiously, deeply, seriously preoccupied; only Mahomet, the big Sidi boy, smiled. It was good that

the air was warm; in the cold he became lumpish, stupid, obstinate as an ox, a mere encumbrance.

The sounds of the sail, hampered now by the spilling-lines that cut into it, were not audible, or only audible vaguely. It was as if each man had his ears full of water. All sounds melted into one tremendous harmony, or, finally, into one great fundamental note: the note of the ship and the sea and wind. As they laid out on the port yard-arm, still the weather yard-arm by half a point of wind, they were jammed against it hard. There was a life-line rigged, and each was inside it. The life-line lay hard across their backs by the very force of the wind. Without it each would have felt secure: it was with difficulty and with both hands on the jackstay that they could shift. Beneath and in front of them the bellying sail, marked out into huge bladders by the spilling-lines, was as taut as a drum. They fingered it helplessly, hopelessly, and looked to Budd as if he could give orders. He and Bram were close together; Jack was next, and by him the Serang. Beyond the Serang the Sidi boy stood smiling foolishly. There were tears in the eyes of the Serang. The big negro drummed on the sail with his huge fists. It was he who got that sail in if any man ever did, and he got his first hold when Budd was on the point of taking them off the yard. He was a man of monstrous strength; the muscles of his back and shoulders stood up like cordage. His hand-grip was like the grip of clip-

hooks. In one wild flurry of the sail, which lifted it upon the yard, he got his hands down by the spilling-lines and gripped the very foot of the sail. He held it desperately with a great grin upon his face and with his white teeth bared. The Serang passed in one swift moment a double turn of a gasket round yard and sail and held it there. In and out from that they conquered the port yard-arm of the sail inch by inch. It tore their skin, broke their nails; they bled at the finger-tips and left bloody marks upon the canvas, but they conquered it. And then they shifted over to the starboard yard-arm. Budd slapped the big negro on the back; Mahomet laughed, but no one heard him.

The lee yard-arm was a worse job. And it was made worse than it might have been by a sudden awful roar beneath their very feet. It sounded as if a great gun had exploded under them. The lower topsail went out of the bolt-ropes in one moment. It went as clean as if it had been cut, all but in one place, and there a strip remained that flew up, flicked like a knife through the boot of the second mate, and cut him to the bone. He never felt it, but the blood trickled and filled his boot. The ship shook and quivered to her very keelson. For one moment it seemed as if the mast must go.

Two hours after they had gone aloft they came down again. Of all the canvas that the *Flying Cloud* had shown in the morning, she kept the

foresail, that one furled upper topsail, and the fore-topmast-staysail.

"The sail-maker who made the foresail ought to have had a medal," said the mate.

"I wonder you got the topsail in," said old Mac, when Budd came by him.

"We didn't," retorted Budd, limping.

"Who did then?"

"The nigger," said Budd.

But Ellison felt he had had a little hand in it, a very sore and skinned hand too, and he was very proud of it.

"I say, sonny, you're all right," said Bram.

Tears came into Jack's eyes, but they were not the kind of tears the old Serang had shed.

The whole crew of Lascars were ready to weep. They called upon Allah and the Prophet, but it seemed as if Allah and the Prophet did not go to sea. So for fear of being asked to do anything else, they crawled under the sails in the sail-locker. For the fore-peak was quite crowded.

But for a moment the *Flying Cloud* was easier. The glass still fell, but it fell very slowly now.

"I'll have another nip," said old Mac.

The captain slept, and now Mrs. Dundas, with her boy in her arms, sat by him like a woman who has been stunned. She feared for her child. The women in the steerage had exhausted their prayers. They only whimpered.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE LITTLE BOX

At eight bells in the afternoon watch the skysail-mast, which had been bending like a whip, finally decided to stand no more of it and went like a carrot or like a stunsail-boom. None of the wreck came down below; it hung jammed on the royal and t'gallant-yards.

When sails go it is bad enough, but that has to be expected at times. When spars begin, it looks very serious, and though Mackintosh had not the remotest notion of sending any one aloft to clear away the wreck, for he recognized it was frankly impossible, it annoyed him greatly to have no one to do it, even if he had decided to try. The Lascars were in a state of terror, a state of "holy terror," as Budd said; they were, if anything, worse than the passengers in the 'tween-decks.

But, indeed, that any one should be scared was only in the nature of things, and it took some one of stolidity or a peculiarly reckless temperament not to be alarmed. The weather, so far from showing any signs of moderating, grew distinctly worse, and though the seas were unable to rise, yet they

were, with the shifting of the wind (it was now west-by-south), distinctly more irregular. The glass even yet fell a little; it was prodigiously and alarmingly low, and those who understood it knew that with the first rise the wind would be even worse. The centre of the cyclone in whose northern semicircle the *Flying Cloud* was scudding must be close at hand to the south'ard.

Soon after eight bells Budd and Mackintosh, who now had both taken more to drink than was good for them, determined, for no very obvious reason, to have the Lascars out on deck.

"Pretty fellows they are," said Mac. "Never did I see such a crowd!"

"They've done nothing, sir. They wouldn't go aloft," said Budd. "The skipper's been too soft with 'em always."

"Aye, that he has," said Mac; "these niggers take proper severe handling; one must be firm with 'em, Mr. Budd."

"If I had my way I'd be firm with a hand-spike," said Budd truculently. "Half of 'em are in the fore-peak or under sails in the sail-locker. I vote we get 'em out, sir, the damn skulkers. Why, there were only four of 'em aloft with me on the topsail-yard, and the best of 'em the nigger."

"Let's hoof 'em out on deck," said Mac, grinning.

"I'm on, sir," said Budd with a chuckle. They went down on the main-deck together. There was

no one on the poop but one of the apprentices and the *Sukkanees* at the wheel.

At this time Jack and Bram were down below. Bram had produced another bottle of whiskey, and started drinking it without very much discretion. Jack took one drink and then went on deck again. He came just in time to see what had come of the mate's attempt to turn the hands up. The first thing he heard was Budd yelling "Mutiny!" at the top of his voice. The second mate smothered in blood was sitting on the main-hatch.

"Mutiny! mutiny!" he roared. He bellowed so loud that Jack heard him even over the screaming of the wind. He ran to him as hard as he could across the wet, slippery teak decks, and as he got to him he saw the mate come staggering along by the deck-house in like evil case.

"What is it?" asked Jack.

"It's mutiny, mutiny," roared Budd. "Those swine knocked us down!"

And again he yelled "Mutiny!"

The men were gathered in a crowd just outside the port foc'sle door, many of them armed with belaying-pins and handspikes. They seemed in a fearful state of excitement.

The mate came reeling past Jack with a curious wondering smile upon his face. His head had been cut open, and he was obviously partially stunned even now. He grabbed Jack by the arm to steady himself as he let go the rail along the deck-

house. Then he subsided on the deck in a heap.

"Good God!" said Ellison. He understood nothing, could make nothing of it. Yet both the mates were hurt and the men had hurt them. Jack thought for one moment and then ran aft. He put his head into the booby-hatch and yelled for Bram and Watson.

"Quick! quick!" said Jack. Both those he called came out on deck.

"The men have half-killed the mates," he cried.

Bram was in a mad state of drink. His eyes glittered wonderfully; he was white as a sheet. Excitement got hold of him like madness. He turned to Watson.

"Get your revolver, Watson," said Bram, dancing. Whenever he was wild he danced furiously; it made him look like a white savage.

"We'll turn 'em all out on deck," said Bram, when Watson came up again. The three of them ran for'ard on the starboard side. As Bram reached the galley he jumped into it, seized the longest and most wicked-looking carving-knife there, and ran out again. Ellison, not to be behindhand, but with the very vaguest notion of what was to be done, followed suit by snatching an iron pin from the rail. The three of them went into the foc'sle.

"Out on deck, sooars," roared Bram. He looked mad and awful. Only one poor lame devil

remonstrated, protesting in Lascari Bât and Gujeráthi that he was a man of peace. Watson pointed his weapon at him and he went. The fo'c'sle was wet as a sluice, gloomy as a dungeon, reeking with oil and old shark, and the mixed mingled stinks of the sea and the Orient and man. But in a moment it was empty. The Lascars screamed in terror and ran like rats. They were all chased out of the port door, and stood in a wondering cowed group.

And then a little sense came into Ellison's head. If there was any time when the captain was needed, it was now, and if he was capable he should come. Jack slipped aft and ran straight into the saloon, finding Mrs. Dundas and the captain there. Dundas was seated at the table, staring right ahead of him.

"Oh, sir!" said Jack.

"What is it?" asked Dundas thickly.

The men, sir — "

"What of 'em, boy?"

"They've half-killed the mates, sir!"

And Jane Dundas cried out at this.

"Oh, come, sir," said Jack. The captain rose and followed him. Apparently he went without fear or doubt. His eyes were heavy; he seemed quite peaceful.

The two mates were still at the main-hatch when they got there; old Mac on the deck and the second mate sitting. Just as the skipper came to them

the *Cloud* shipped a tremendous sea over the port rail; it filled the main-deck and knocked Jack and the skipper down. For a moment the boy thought he was overboard: he found himself swimming. Then he landed against the second mate, and got his feet again and helped the skipper to his.

When they got for'ard they found Watson and Bram still menacing the frightened crowd.

"You've struck my pals, you soozers, you swine," said Bram. He danced dreadfully and flourished his horrid knife. He roared his lamentations about his injured "pals" and really looked dangerous. Watson, though not a little drunk, was very much quieter. But even he was dangerous. The only quiet man there was the captain. He might have been at a solemn tea-party.

"Put that knife down, sir," said Dundas.

Bram declined to do anything of the sort. He vowed that he would disembowel the entire crew first. The old Serang came to the front of the crowd. The rest thrust him forward.

"Into the foc'sle, Serang!" said the skipper.

They went in.

"Drop that knife, Gray," ordered the captain. But still Bram swore that he would not. He cried out perpetually that his "poor pals" had been hurt and that he would have revenge. Then Jack, seeing there was nothing to be done with the man, came behind him, put his arm about his throat, and got him down upon his back. Watson helped,

and put his foot upon the knife. The captain stooped and picked it up.

"Give me that revolver, sir," said the captain to Watson.

"Nothing of the kind, sir," replied Watson haughtily. "I'll be damned if I do."

In spite of the drug, or perhaps because of it, there was some sense in the "old man." What he could not break he might use.

"Then send every one below, Mr. Watson," said the skipper. It was a pleasing and most delightful job for Watson. He ordered every one below at the muzzle of his "gun." Even Bram was not exempt. Only Jack escaped his notice by slipping into the galley among his friends, the *bhandaris*.

Then the apprentices carried the two mates in and stowed them away in their bunks, without troubling to remove their wet and bloody clothing.

The *bhandaris* explained to Jack what it had all been about. They were poor cowardly men, and were very glad that it was all over without any one being killed. Besides the mates, only three or four of the men had been hurt a little. Indeed, the most hurt was Said, the steward, who had run out on deck and come into collision with Watson. Watson had knocked him down with his fist and cut him badly.

"Too muchy drink," said the head *bhandari*.

It was true enough, but the reason for too much drink was the failure of the captain. As poor Mac

said, he could be master or mate, but to be neither one nor the other was too much for him. His time was coming.

Until that day Jack Ellison had never spoken to the skipper, but now he was to speak to him again. When he went out on to the main-deck once more, after drinking coffee in the galley, he found no one there. The apprentices, save Macaulay, who was on the poop, were in their berth. Bram was weeping down below, and Watson was begging his pardon for having helped to take his knife away. The two mates were asleep or insensible, with no one paying any attention to their injuries. But the skipper was on the poop hanging on to the rail as he had done in the morning when he had refused to shorten sail.

"I wonder what he is thinking of," said Jack, as he scuttled aft and went below to change his things. He was soon to know. But before he knew he had to settle matters with Bram.

"Is that Jack Ellison?" he heard Bram say when he came down.

"It's I, Bram," said Jack.

"You're not a pal of mine any more," sobbed Bram, lugubriously. "You took away my knife."

"The skipper did," said Jack.

"And you helped; you pulled me down. Watson says you did."

"Then he might have said nothing about it," retorted Jack. "There's trouble enough as it is."

Watson, who was growing quite sober again, acknowledged this was true.

"I'm sorry I told him, Ellison, but he said I did it."

"Then I apologize to you, Bram," said Jack.  
"I'm sorry, very sorry."

"Are you *really* sorry?" asked Bram.

"Very sorry," replied Jack untruthfully.

"Then you are a pal of mine again," said Bram.

"Put me into my bunk, Jack. I won't let Watson touch me. I hate Watson, and he's not a pal of mine at all. He pointed his revolver at me."

And presently Bram fell asleep and Jack went on deck once more. He found the skipper on the main-deck.

"I've lost something," said the skipper. His voice shook: he trembled as he spoke.

"What have you lost, sir?"

"A little box," said the skipper, "a little brass box. It must have fallen out of my pocket when the sea knocked me down."

"Was it very valuable, sir?" asked Jack.

"My God! yes," said the captain. "But I can't find it, I never shall find it. I've looked everywhere, everywhere!"

And then Jack knew what it contained. It held the last bit of the man's opium.

"A little box," said the skipper, "a little valuable brass box. Oh, my God, my little box!"

The wind was frightful and the ship was a mad,

wild thing, carrying little human beings who were white and scared and fainting. But he thought not of the wind or the white scared sea or of the souls in his charge, but of his little box that held his own poor lost soul.

"My little box," he moaned. "Good God! they've killed me!"

Jack heard him say it and forgot the awful wind and the pallid screaming seas.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE NIGHT

WHEN the night fell upon the *Flying Cloud* she looked already half a wreck. From most of her yards there flew long pennants of torn canvas, knotted into whips that shook her when they cracked. Her decks were swept clean of any loose gear, and even one of the harness-casks was wrenched from its lashings. The galley funnel was bent and broken; much of the stuff on the top of the house had broken adrift and gone overboard, including all the broken stunsail-booms stowed there. More than one of the main-deck ports had been burst outwards by the weight of the shipped seas, and in the scuppers lay a prodigious tangle of gear washed off the pins. The great coir hawser which had been coiled on the main-hatch lay in the port scuppers: some ten fathoms of it trailed alongside in the seas and were torn away fibre by fibre. But all this, indeed, was nothing; what was strange to those who knew the seas and understood seamen was her deserted look as the darkness fell upon her in the hurricane.

Now the glass had ceased to fall, and, indeed,

showed signs of rising, though it pumped visibly and no man could say whether it might not fall again. There was for a little while some lessening of the hurricane force of the air, and as the strength of the wind seemed to lessen the seas rose. As the cyclone ran ahead of her, so the wind shifted more into the south'ard quarter, and the seas were irregular and very big. The *Sukkanees* at the wheel dared not look behind them: the following seas seemed overwhelming. But the *Cloud* scudded fast; once that day she had been logged doing sixteen knots, and in some squalls she must have done more. And this with no whole canvas on her but the unconquerable reefed foresail. Yet as the seas followed they lapped over and pooped her lightly; more than once foaming water broke about the helmsmen's feet.

From the time the captain missed his little box he was truly a madman. He thought not of his ship, but only of himself. His folly and his letting go of all authority, save in the way of bitter and alarmed obstinacy, had made the mates forget their duty and be what they were. They lay insensible in their bunks, oblivious of the calls upon them. In such an hour a real man would have risen to his duty grandly; but the captain was an opium-eater first of all, and a seaman long, long after. He went below and raved until his wife fainted; two of the stewards carried her into her cabin and left her there. And Dundas still raved

like a madman and searched his room for any of the drug that might be there, yet was not. He forgot that there was no one in charge of the deck; forgot that there was no one on the poop but the quartermasters. And if it had not been for young Rufford, who dared to come down and tell him so, he might never have remembered it. The lad trembled as he spoke.

"I'll see to it, boy," said the captain. He saw to it in the strangest way. He sent for Hackett, the white carpenter, and put him in charge of the decks; put him, a man that was not, properly speaking, a sailor, though he had been many years to sea. Chips knew nothing about handling vessels, knew nothing of their dangers or their capabilities. His strength was in the mere handling of tools. He was not a strong man, nor perhaps a brave one, though women adored him. He was very handsome, and had a fine black beard that hid a little chin.

So the roaring night fell on the *Flying Cloud* and found him keeping the first watch alone with the *Sukkanees* at the wheel.

"You can call me at midnight," said the skipper.

"Oh, sir!" said Hackett blankly.

"At midnight," repeated Dundas, as he went below. He left Hackett raging, afraid, indignant.

"Oh, he's mad," said Hackett.

Truly, it would have been more sensible to have

put the old Serang in charge of her, or even Bram Gray. Why, it would have been less absurd to give her into the hands of young Ellison!

"I'm only the carpenter," wailed Hackett; "what can I do?"

He could do nothing but watch her smash her way through the seas. He was terrified already.

There was a sense of terror all through the ship. No one kept a lookout: no one dared to; there were no side lights; she ran blindly. The men in the foc'sle sat in their dim-lighted, stinking gloom, and prayed to Allah or did not pray. They believed the ship could not live till the morning. Some of them moaned; the old Serang was very much depressed.

Down below in the 'tween-decks the exhausted women held their weeping children in their arms throughout the long, hard hours. Most of the men sat at the table and swayed to and fro. Water came perpetually through the interstices of the booby-hatch and dropped upon the slimy wet decks, as seas came on board. Most of the men in the second cabin were drunk and asleep. The little tenor sang no more; the pawnbroker would have pledged his poor worthless soul for help. The yet more worthless Walker lay dead drunk. Among them all in the steerage and second cabin there was no one with any waking cheerfulness but Ellison. Watson, who was partly sober and still awake, was now overpowered by

the roar of the wind and the seas and the gloom of the night. Bram slept heavily.

"This is horrid, young 'un," said Watson to Jack. "I'd rather be on land."

He put it mildly. He would have given years of life to be there. He was strained and wrenched and tired; the movement of the ship gave no one any peace. Even the sleeping men held on to the edges of their bunks and groaned.

"Why, so would I, for that matter," said Jack. But he had still an unexhausted stock of curiosity. At times, truly, his heart was in his mouth. When the *Flying Cloud* plunged it seemed that she could never rise again. And when at last she rose upon the crest of a tormented sea the shrieks and clamour of the wind were awful.

"I wonder —" said Watson.

"What?"

"I wonder if she'll ever get there."

"To be sure," said Jack.

It was nearly midnight when he could stand being below no more.

"I say, where are you going?" asked Watson.

"On deck."

"Don't be a fool," urged Watson; "you'll be washed overboard."

The momentary taking off of the wind before the glass rose had been succeeded by heavier and heavier squalls from the west-southwest. The clouds pressed down on the ship and the ocean,

which was again of a milky and almost phosphorescent whiteness. Yet during the interval the seas had risen and were prodigious and alarming. The ship seemed at times to be in a valley surrounded by white peaks that threatened her. Then the peaks fell away and she climbed with a temerarious and hazardous effort to a gigantic crest, and there flung herself again into an opening trough, which was like a grave. The howling of the wind and the frantic uproar of the knotted canvas still remaining on the yards mingled with the screaming of the seas themselves. For, indeed, it seemed that the very waters had voices, voices of terror, the terror of nature in some monstrous secular extremity. There was no dignity left to the ship or to the world itself. The universe was a blind and frantic chaos. Ellison's surviving curiosity now appeared to him the curiosity which inquires into death, though it still took on a curious fearfulness. He climbed up the poop ladder and grasped the rail at the break of the poop. He found Hackett there. But Hackett was crying.

"I don't want to be here. I want to go below," sobbed Hackett. He screamed this into Jack's very ear, and even then the words came dully through the uproar of the hurricane.

"Where's the captain?" cried Jack, as he held on to him and the rail.

Hackett burst into a stream of blasphemy against the skipper. The damn dog, he said, had

put him there and had then crawled down to his wife. Not even a damn dog of an apprentice had dared show his cowardly nose on deck, screamed Hackett, as he grasped Jack by the arm, and staggered in the clutch of the wind.

"Go down and call him," said Jack. This was horrible and most incredible. Who, indeed, would believe it, if it were told? And as Jack spoke he was consumed with pity for the captain, and he was very sorry for the mates. What would they think of themselves to-morrow, if there were a to-morrow for them and the ship?

"All right, I'll go," said Hackett. He crawled to the companion and got below. In five minutes he returned.

"I called him two hours ago," said Hackett, "and he said he would come. He says he will come now. I'm going."

He went down on the main-deck there and then, and got for'ard in a big smother of foam and spray that hid him from Jack's eyes that now, in the darkness lighted dimly by the creaming seas, opened and saw the ship even to the black arch of the foresail.

For more than a long hour, when every minute was long waiting and yet swift in possible disaster, Ellison stayed on the poop and no one came up. He went aft to the *Sukkanees* and spoke to them, and they answered nothing, for now the ship steered madly. In the gleam of the binnacle lamp

he saw their white eyeballs shine and saw their bared teeth as they grinned and held her. The sweat ran down them in streams. They should have been relieved at midnight, but no one struck eight bells and no one went for'ard to call the reliefs out. Yet not for one instant could Lalu at the weather-wheel take his mind off his task. He and his mate, Rangoon Tom, were the only men on board that time who did their duty and could do no other without death for them and for all. But though they did not speak, they smiled. It was so bitterly strange a thing to these men of the sea to know that none was with them but this young Englishman, who was not a seaman. He smiled back at them, and so gave them encouragement. But truly in the hot necessity of their work they were the best men in the ship, and though they ached and were over-weighted, they yet endured.

And still the captain did not come up. He sat below and stared at death, and chewed his fate hard and swallowed the very dregs of his poisoned life, while these men were chained to the wheel and a boy walked where he should have been.

At one o'clock, two bells in the middle watch, Lalu spoke to him at last. They could stand no more. Would he go for'ard and tell the other quartermasters? He went readily enough, and dodging one big sea and missing another by a fluke, he found his way to the foc'sle and got the

men out. But while he was doing this the end seemed at hand.

The captain came up bareheaded while Jack was away for'ard. He staggered as he walked, and ran to the weather mizzen-rigging and held on there. Lalu told Jack of this afterwards. While he stood there he screamed something out aloud that the Malay did not understand, but he heard and repeated to Ellison the words " God " and " Christ." He seemed to rave, and to speak to the very wind and the lifting, raging seas.

Then Jack came aft again and climbed upon the poop, not knowing that the captain was there. But presently he saw him standing waving one hand, and then he saw him climb the rail, and stand on it, holding to the royal-backstay. And he heard Lalu's voice, hard and shrill, come down the wind.

" Oh, Kaptan Sahib! " cried Lalu lamentably.

The boy saw, and heard, and understood, and his blood turned chill. For a long moment he could not move, but then his strength returned and he ran. And came too late! He saw the captain loose the backstay and throw up his hands and fall into the sea without a sound!

At that dreadful moment, for even in the hell of the hurricane this seemed an incredible horror, the *Sukkanees*, whose eyes had been drawn from their work, came nigh to losing control of the *Flying Cloud*. She yawed frightfully to port, and

in their haste to save her they spun the wheel round and sent her over the other way, so that she almost broached to. As she swung a frightful following sea smote her on the starboard side from midships right to the poop, and with its shock stayed her so that they once more jammed the wheel over, and, with the help of the fore-topmast-staysail, got her away before the wind. But not before the sea came on board. Jack saw it come as he turned and looked for'ard from the mizzen-rigging. It swung inward like a tidal wave, like some huge storm-wave of a cyclone. It rose high above the rail; aye, twelve feet high, and was solid, but edged with foam like a big breaker. It lifted so high that it filled the two ship's boats upon the skids, and with a frightful noise burst the skids down and dashed the boats to flinders on the teak decks. Then the sea itself landed on the deck with a noise like thunder, and filled her fore and aft to the rail, and washed overboard on both sides. The great ship trembled from her trucks to her keelson; for a moment she seemed to stay motionless, as if the decks were burst in and she was filled and foundering. Then she lifted, and the wreck came aft with a rush and stove in the starboard saloon door and the window of the mate's cabin.

In that great sea those two boats went: and the great filled tank that had broken loose in the Bay of Biscay, and with it the other remaining harness-cask. It also washed the coir hawser clean over-

board. It took away the bridge going for'ard from the break of the poop, on which a standard compass stood. It burst open all the main-deck ports, and stripped away the brass rail of the poop from for'ard right to the mizzenmast. It was a wonder, a God's wonder, as some said next day, that the ship herself had not followed the captain! But no one save the two *Sukkanees* and Jack yet knew that he had gone.

As he stood paralyzed he heard in a moment loud cries from the mate's cabin. The cabin was filled, and Mackintosh was almost drowned in his bunk. It took Jack and three men all their strength to open the door against the weight of water. Then the mate came out. He was quite sober now. Jack took him by the arm.

"Oh, sir!" said the boy.

"What is it, Ellison?"

"The captain has jumped overboard!"

"My God!" said the mate.

"I saw him do it, and couldn't stop him, sir."

"And I —"

But Jack knew what he felt, and was sorry. He almost clung to old Mac.

"No one knows but me and the two *Sukkanees* at the wheel," he said.

But Mrs. Dundas was in the swamped saloon asking where her husband was, and no one knew. The frightful alarm caused by the big sea had brought up Watson and Bram, and both of them

were sober now. She asked them, and they could tell her nothing. Then young Macaulay, who had heard the truth from the quartermasters, came down and blurted it out. Yet he had not the whole truth.

"The captain has been washed overboard," he said, wild-eyed and stammering.

She heard him and fell insensible, lying in the water that went to and fro in the saloon.

"Aye, that's better, Ellison," groaned old Mac. "Let's say he was washed overboard doing his duty. And how have I done mine?"

They worked hard and cleared the saloon, and nailed heavy canvas across the doorway to keep the seas out. Yet, truly, since the worst appeared to have happened, the wind seemed to take off a little, and there were lulls, between the squalls, which grew longer and longer still. Old Mac, and Budd, who had also come out of his cabin, spent the rest of the night on deck together. And Jack stayed there with them. One of the women from the steerage was with Jane Dundas.

"We're through it at a price," said old Mac. But he was bitterly ashamed of himself and hated to see the dawn come up.

"I've failed in my duty, lad," he said over and over again.

And still Jack knew he was a good man.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### DAWN

WHEN the day broke at last over the tumultuous seas, though it still blew a heavy gale, the bitter strength of the wind was gone. There was a break in the sky towards the southwest, and the air, though keen, had the splendid quality of a north-wester in northern seas. The *Flying Cloud* looked strange and harassed, but she was still unconquered: still a magnificent instrument for human hands. From every yard blew rags; the wreck of the skysail-mast still hung downwards, with the yard jammed in the main-t'gall'ns'l-backstays; across the main-deck seas still broke through the outward burst deck-ports, but in spite of all she looked a thing of power, able to endure. The seas were yet heavy, but they went now with a gallant swing about them; the wind no longer crushed, but rather animated them; the cruel, wan spindrift crawled no more across a flattened waste of howling waters; the song of the wind was splendid, not now did it seem the cry of nature in some extremity beyond all nature.

Both Budd and old Mac were sombre and down-cast. They, too, had been tried, and tried heavily,

and they could not feel they had come out with honour. The loss of the captain, for all his madness and his folly, was grievous to them, but the loss of their own self-respect was more bitter still. They spoke to each other without their eyes meeting; as they did their work and saw that the men did theirs, there was an audible bitterness in their voices. But the men were quiet; they ran at a word. They knew, too, that they had failed. There was not one of them but the *Sukkanees* and big Mahomet, the Sidi boy, who had the right to look the world or the wind in the face. The old Serang was very humble; when he asked for Ellison to come and read the tallies of the sails he was getting ready to bend as soon as they could be sent aloft, he no longer spoke cheerfully. Instead of "Elzon, Elzon, where Elzon?" he now said meekly, "Elzon Sahib, will you come read tally for me, Sahib?"

And yet old Mac might have been proud of one thing. He was responsible for the state of the ship, for the adequacy and condition of her gear and her spars. And she had stood the test wonderfully.

"I doubted, lad, if she'd get through the night," he said to Jack at noon; "but everything that might hang on did, my boy. She's a great ship, that she is, and but for the poor mad skipper we'd never have lost a stitch."

Save Jane Dundas and her boy, there was not a

soul who did not know that the captain had jumped overboard. She had been told, and believed, that the big sea had taken him, and it was better so, though very grievous and awful, than that she should have felt, as old Mac did, that her folly and haste had killed him. The little lad, when he was told that his father was dead, understood nothing, but, nevertheless, grew serious. After a long time of thought, he exclaimed very cheerfully:

“ Then the ship is my ship, isn't it? ”

So the king dies and the king lives, all over the world. But his mother cried and could not be comforted, for she remembered her man when he had been a man indeed.

That afternoon they bent two topsails and cleared away the wreck of the skysail-mast. Out of a spare spar, Hackett, who no longer wept, but bragged about having had charge of the ship during her worst time, dubbed a new skysail-mast with the adze. With that he was very skilful. He said he could put sixpence under his big toe and split it with the adze. But he couldn't make a real man of himself with any tool, and Ellison told him so. The boy had learned much, very much indeed. He and Bram Gray and Watson worked aloft all that afternoon and the next day, until the *Flying Cloud* was a cloud of canvas once more and went through the shining sunny seas like a happy living thing. The passengers were out on deck

again. They dried their clothes and aired their courage. Yet they talked apprehensively of Australia, so long had the *Cloud* been their home. What they would do in the great Southern Land seemed not now so sure; they feared it at the last.

That night Jack and Mackintosh spent the first watch together.

"Well, my lad, we'll be parting soon," said the mate.

"Yes, sir," answered Jack, a little sorrowfully.

"We've all got to part some time or the other," sighed the mate. He liked the boy amazingly.

"What are you going to do in Australia?" he asked.

Jack owned that he did not know.

"Well, there's a deal of work in the country, so I've been told," said old Mac; "maybe you'll some day own a farm, eh? I wish I did, though I'm captain now. There's great comfort in a farm. I've a brother a farmer. But I'd have never been satisfied there, I know. The sea draws many a one, my boy."

"It's a fine life," said Jack.

The old chap sighed.

"There might be worse," he said.

"And the *Flying Cloud's* a splendid ship," said Jack.

"Well, she's all right as a ship," said Mac. He spoke as if she might be something else. He added presently, after they had taken a turn:

**" I think it's a pity you aren't a sailor."**

**" Oh, do you, sir? " cried Jack.**

**The mate nodded gravely.**

**" Still, farming is better," he said; " you stick to farming, my lad."**

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### ON THE FORE - ROYAL - YARD

THE sun was going down in a cloud of glory, and the sea, wrinkled lightly by a quiet breeze, spread out in a great plain of amethyst and sapphire. High above were sailing flecks of rose; in the northeast a star showed dimly; a distant sail was beneath it, but did not seem to move. And yet the *Flying Cloud* went steadily; a little foam showed lightly round her bows; her wake was like a satin ribbon far astern. From up aloft she looked divine; there was a glow of pink upon her white bleached canvas which made her rather a creature of the sky than of the earth or sea.

"It's very beautiful," said Jack. He and Bram were together on the fore-royal-yard for the last time. Although there was no land in sight, they knew it was, in the great measure of sea distances, close aboard them. This very evening they hoped to raise the light upon barren sun-dried Cape Otway.

"Oh, aye," said Bram gloomily, "you're such a lad for seeing the beastly beauty of things. Now I tell you honestly, I see the other side. But I'll not

go for you over that, young fellow. Have your own way, and see what you will while you can. Here I'm coming to Australia, and what do I want there? I'd rather see the mud of my own town than all the gold the country carries, lad. I'm a fool, a damned fool, that's what I am."

Down on deck they heard the clink and clatter of the cable as the Lascars ranged it, dragging it with chain-hooks. At a very heavy pull they sang "*Allah, Ay-la, Allah*," and the sad music of their voices floated high in a melancholy cadence.

"You've been very good to me, take it all round," said Jack.

At this Bram smiled.

"Oh, you're all right," he said more cheerfully; "you've learned a lot this trip, Jack. You're not half-green now, and when you came on board —"

"Was I very green?" asked Jack in expostulation.

"Oh my!" was all Bram said in answer. But he went on talking.

"It's been a strange sort of passage this, a devil of a trip, and we've lost the poor skipper and had quite a breeze, young 'un. Now you know wind, my boy, and you'll not mistake a calm for a cyclone, as if you were a young lady passenger. However, here we are and Australia is close on board, and the next thing is to handle it, and I reckon I shall fail as usual."

"Why should you?" asked Jack.

"Because I'm a fool," said Bram. "But all this is your fault for getting me up here. To be up aloft without working fills me with gloom. I don't like long views. I'll go and play Nap. Are you coming?"

But Jack would stay where he was. He looked below his feet and saw Bram go down. And as he lost him the sun set and the stars sprang out of the sky as if they were the lights of some heavenly high coast, and the breeze grew a little chill. He heard the clank of the cable more plainly and caught Budd's voice. He saw Jane Dundas on the poop. She was clad in black. Her boy played about her and laughed shrilly. Then he heard the Serang call "*Bas!*" "*Enough!*" The *butti-wallah*, or lamp-man, put out the side lights; then he went aft with the binnacle lamp. The darkness fell quickly.

Then quite clearly came Budd's words:

"*Jab sab hogaya, siti maro*; when all is finished, pipe down."

In a moment the Serang's clear pipe trilled in the darkness like a bird's call and it was night. He heard the men's bare feet go pattering for'ard. They chattered almost gaily. It seemed to them that they were much nearer home. From Australia they would go to India, their own warm country.

The chillness following sundown melted pres-

ently from the air. Perhaps it was the influence of the land, the hot land of sun away to the north-west. The little clouds melted in the zenith; the stars were strong and splendid; Canopus burned like a great globe of silver fire high above the Southern Cross. A crescent moon swam on the western horizon; the sea and night mingled and were one.

There were many on deck, some glad, some unhappy. Presently he heard a woman speak, and a moment later the little tenor sang to them. He once more asked "Sweet Belle Mahone" to stay for him at heaven's gate. He, too, was sad, and his heavenly voice was ardently sorrowful, most moving and most melancholy.

And even as the music of his voice echoed and died away among the lofty sails Jack lifted his head and saw a star of light low down and far away. He watched it eagerly for a long minute, and then rising to his feet, and standing on the yard, he turned and sang out clearly:

"On deck there!"

There was a stir below and old Mac answered him.

"Halloa?"

"A light three points on the port bow, sir," he replied.

Budd climbed into the fore-rigging, and when he reached the lower topsail-yard he saw what Jack had seen.

" 'Tis Cape Otway, sir," said Budd, as he went down again.

The men turned out of the foc'sle of their own accord.

" *Yahum parwan*, square the yards," said old Mac.

THE END.

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